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✠ ILLUSTRATION COMMENTERS

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IKENO:	Character designer for "Devil May Cry 2" and "3". Referred to as "Ikeno".
TOMOYA OHTSUBO:	Character motion artist for "Devil May Cry". Referred to as "Ohtsubo".
NARU OMORI:	Promotional art illustrator for "Devil May Cry 2", "3", and "4". Referred to as "Omori".
YASUKO SHIMODA:	Background designer for "Devil May Cry". Referred to as "Shimoda".
MAKOTO TSUCHIBAYASHI:	Character designer for "Devil May Cry". Referred to as "Tsuchibayashi".
YUICHIRO HIRAKI:	Character motion artist for "Devil May Cry", "Devil May Cry 4", and "DmC". Referred to as "Hiraki".
HIROYUKI NARA:	Character motion artist for "Devil May Cry 2", "3", and "4". Referred to as "Nara".
YOSHINORI MATSUSHITA:	Monster designer for "Devil May Cry". Referred to as "Matsushita".
TATSUYA YOSHIKAWA:	Character designer for "Devil May Cry 4". Referred to as "Yoshikawa".

*The games in this book are presented in chronological order according to the "Devil May Cry" series' storyline.

*Game subtitles have been omitted.

Interview

MISSION.1 ● THE MOTION ARTISTS WHO BREATHE LIFE INTO CHARACTERS

MOTION ARTISTS BRING OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS TO LIFE ON-SCREEN. TOMOYA OHTSUBO AND YUICHIRO HIRAKI ARE MOTION ARTISTS WHO WORKED ON "DEVIL MAY CRY", AND WE GOT TO SIT DOWN WITH THEM.

✦ FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH "DEVIL MAY CRY"

Could the two of you introduce yourselves and tell us a bit about how you came to be involved with "Devil May Cry" [hereinafter referred to as "DMC"]?

Hiraki: I was employed with SNK before Capcom. While working on "The King of Fighters" [hereinafter "KoF"], I started on additional motions for Andy Bogard and Kim Kaphwan, but then the lead pixel artist was transferred, and I was selected as their replacement. I then created Kyo Kusanagi in "KoF '94" and Iori Yagami in "KoF '95". In 1997, I quit SNK and founded Psikyo Japan with some other former SNK employees. We then made "Daraku Tenshi - The Fallen Angels". In that game, I worked on the character Hajji Mibu. Shortly after, Psikyo Japan was absorbed by Psikyo, but around that time, Fujioka [Kaname Fujioka; known for the "Monster Hunter" series] came to me and said, "We're making Capcom vs. SNK. Want to help us out with the pixel art for Kyo and Iori?" You see, I'd known Fujioka since my days at SNK. In the end, though, my work wasn't actually used. [laughs] But because I left in order to do Kyo and Iori's pixel art, there was apparently a big panic over the position I vacated. [laughs] After about another six months, I accepted another offer from Capcom and was picked up by Mikami-san [Shinji Mikami; known for the "Resident Evil" series, hereinafter referred to as "RE"], and I've been with Capcom ever since. I originally thought I'd be on the "RE" team after joining Capcom, but they put me on "Dino Crisis" [hereinafter referred to as "DC"], where I worked on the Oviraptor and a few others. When "DC 2" was done, Kamiya-san [Hideki Kamiya; known for the "DMC" series] took notice of the Oviraptor motions I'd done and invited me to join the "DMC" team.

Ohtsubo: I don't have an epic career history like Hiraki's. [laughs] I graduated school, joined Capcom, and that's about it. I was placed in the console division, and my first project was "DC". I started as a background designer, but the work the motion artists were doing seemed fascinating, so that's what I set my sights on. I got my wish when I was made a motion artist for the enemies in "DMC [1]".

✦ RESPONSIBLE FOR A PART OF CHARACTER PERFORMANCE

We understand that the two of you are "motion artists", but for the readers who are unaware of what exactly that means, could you go into detail about the nature of your work?

Hiraki: First, the modelers give us bare-bones mannequins of the characters to work with. The base pose we receive is the "T pose", called so because the character resembles the letter "T", with their arms stretched out. Next, we may have the character holding a rod-shaped tool and swinging it around, for instance. Maybe it's a sword. Gradually we come to learn about who the character is, so we incorporate that, as well as whether their sword is heavy or light, whether it's a katana or a Western sword, what exactly the character is swinging at, etc. As we incorporate these things, the mannequin starts coming to life. In the case of Nero from "DMC 4", the process went like this: The mannequin is swinging a rod-shaped tool. → The mannequin is swinging a sword. → The mannequin is swinging a heavy Western sword. → Nero is swinging a heavy Western sword. → Nero is swinging a heavy Western sword at a demon... and so on. At the very least, the player has to understand that the character is swinging a

sword, but that alone isn't enough to create a real sense of connection, so it's our job to add to the mannequin until it can adequately communicate who this character is and how and why they're moving the way they are.

Ohtsubo: Beyond that, it's up to motion artists to teach the player - through character motions - whether what they're doing is "right" or "wrong". In that sense, we're responsible for part of the character's performance. In practical terms, we'd first adjust each character with the available tools. That's always tough, but it's nothing that can't be done with enough time. Rather, figuring out each character's essence for myself and projecting that in-game was always the hardest part for me. Time and time again, I'd watch the work I'd just done playing out on the screen and come away saying, "No, that's not really it." [laughs]

We hear the phrase "60 frames per second" a lot, but does that mean you're actually designing 60 different shots for every second of gameplay?

Hiraki: In reality, it just means we're designing a lot of "key" poses. Everything flows automatically from there. 60 FPS does imply 60 different poses, but all we really do is make sure that the poses between the key ones don't look strange.

Do designs and gameplay elements ever take cues from the motion artists' suggestions?

Hiraki: I've had that happen a lot, yes. I often speak up during the design process. When it comes to the gameplay that Capcom is known for, we try to create an enjoyable gameplay experience for the player through motion and form [design]; rarely does the design determine gameplay and motion. Each character's individuality doesn't just come from his or her design, but also from the modeling process that comes after. The modeling and design processes are inevitably intertwined with motion. Almost all the time, in fact.

Ohtsubo: Right. A character's outward appearance and motions are created through a constant back-and-forth feedback loop between motion artists, modelers, and designers.

Hiraki: Sometimes we'll be testing, and if we see that some part is getting in the way or that a character's essential silhouette is somehow lost on-screen, we'll go and have a talk with the modelers. We might ask them to adjust a character model's "weight" [a ratio that has to do with polygon count] so that the silhouette is clearer, for instance. Or you might have the reverse; a modeler could come to us saying that he adjusted the "weight" and needs us to try compensating with appropriate motions. Fine-tuning like that will play out many, many times throughout development.

Ohtsubo: I often remember asking other team members to alter weapon shapes and sizes so that a certain motion could be seen more clearly.

Can you give us an example from "DMC"?

Ohtsubo: Well, I was totally focused on the tasks at hand at the time. [laughs]

The switch from "RE" to "DMC" was hard, no?

Hiraki: Indeed. There was also a time when "DMC" was titled "Karnival". Kamiya-san was adamant that it be "Karnival" with a "K", not a "C".

Ohtsubo: He was always saying, "The 'K' makes it cooler." [laughs]

Hiraki: The protagonist of "Karnival" was Tony Redgrave. He was the original incarnation of Dante. They're basically the same, except that Tony didn't have a sword.



Was his design pretty much already decided upon when you joined "DMC", Hiraki-san?

Hiraki: Yes, it was. At the time, Tsuchibayashi-san [Makoto Tsuchibayashi; see page 5] was working on Dante's model.

✦ THE REVOLUTIONARY "HIGH TIME" LAUNCHER

What do you pay extra attention to while designing motions for the main characters in the "DMC" series? Are there any aspects you're really fond of? Let's start with Dante.

Hiraki: At the point when I was looking at Tsuchibayashi-san's drawings, Dante seemed to be a nihilistic anti-hero with a bit of a dark side. He's got these demonic powers and he can transform into a demon with Devil Trigger. Tsuchibayashi-san and I thought that he maybe prefers to fight in human form but will rely on his demon powers when he's really in trouble. So at first I portrayed him as being reluctant when he activates Devil Trigger, but shortly after starting on that design, Kamiya-san came over and said, "No, he should be excited." [laughs] "He should be super excited when transforming." So we changed course completely. I was also shocked to hear Dante's line before the battle with Phantom. He says, "I hope for your sake you have something inside that big body of yours." I realized that he's an incorrigible joke-cracker, like the protagonist of "Cobra".



"I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE YOU HAVE SOMETHING INSIDE THAT BIG BODY OF YOURS."

TOMOYA OHTSUBO

Responsible for enemy motion in "DEVIL MAY CRY". Along with Hiraki, he was one of the main staff members for "SENGOKU BASARA", working on the characters Nobunaga Oda, Keiji Maeda, and Kotaro Fuma. He was the lead motion artist on "SENGOKU BASARA 2" and "3".

YUICHIRO HIRAKI

The lead motion artist for Dante in "DEVIL MAY CRY" and the motion supervisor for the "SENGOKU BASARA" series. He created Masamune Date, and is fond of insane characters like Mitsuhide Akechi.

Once I came to understand the character, I liked him more than I thought I would. As far as things I watched out for, I knew the selling point was that Dante is "stylish", so I made sure his poses looked good from any angle. I also added that slight head tilt when he walks.



Ohtsubo: I hear Kamiya-san is actually a fan of "Cobra".

Hiraki: What really helped Dante come into his own were the motions for the shotgun and Stinger. The shotgun was planned for "RE 4", so we already had its basic motions in place to some extent. But what can you do with a shotgun besides hold and fire it normally, with two hands? That's not stylish at all. But what if it's fired one-handed? That's how they did it in "Mad Max", after all. Given that the shotgun was a leftover asset from "RE", I decided to do something even more unconventional with it; Dante would reload it with one hand. That touch really helped me break away from the shadow of "RE".



As for Stinger, I decided that it had to be something completely different than what it started as and serve a different purpose as an attack. When I first received a gameplay sample, it had your basic button-mashing action for combos, but jumping hadn't been implemented yet, so all you could do was spam gun and sword attacks from the ground. Now, fighting games have the golden trio, right? Anti-aerials, charging attacks, and projectiles. In 3D action games, too, you have charging attacks, launchers, and projectiles. Without those, gameplay can never really get off the ground, so to speak, so that's why I came up with Stinger, which is a charging attack.

I think the shotgun motion really helped Dante come into his own, as did the charging Stinger attack. Then they implemented jump attacks and we got the "High Time" launching attack. "Ah. This'll really work," I thought. I love how he shoots enemies with Ebony and Ivory after performing High Time. (laughs)

Ohtsubo: Right. That launching power was revolutionary.



As soon as they introduced High Time, we began discussing motions that would launch all enemies into the air and damage them. I remember immediately getting to work on implementing that.

Hiraki: I specialize in fighting games, and I've always personally been a fan of "Virtua Fighter" [hereinafter referred to as "VF"]. But the "VF" game that came out around that time just didn't sell well at all. I guess people weren't impressed? But I thought the fighting moves were amazing! I was really into it. The only problem is that I had no one to play against, because the only way to play was with two people using an Astro City cabinet (a type of arcade cabinet with one screen and two sets of controls on the same panel). (laughs)

In "VF", ordinary moves couldn't be canceled into special moves, so juggling launchers were the best option for combos. So when it comes to combos in polygon-based games, I think the best way to do it is with those same launchers. I brought that line of thinking to "DMC".

So you were influenced by "VF"?

Hiraki: Yeah. I always found the strongest characters in "VF" and "Tekken" to be the ones that can juggle. It's the same when it comes to demons. (laughs)

So "DMC" didn't allow jumping, initially?

Hiraki: There was only a short time between the game becoming "Karnival" and Dante being given a sword, and we did argue about whether or not he should be able to jump.

Ohtsubo: I'm not sure why, but Kamiya-san was very much against jumping.

Hiraki: We eventually wore him down with the argument that a 3D game with so much action simply had to include the ability to jump. He relented in the end, albeit bitterly. Maybe he was thinking about how much extra work it would add?

Ohtsubo: No way... (laughs)

Hiraki: (laughs) But once it was decided, Kamiya-san's mood picked up. After jumping was implemented, he didn't hold back, exclaiming, "How about a double jump?" The stage designers weren't so pleased. "We didn't build these stages to be viewed from such a high perspective", they said. (laughs) But they did their best to adjust everything, only to be blindsided again by the introduction of the flying Devil Trigger mode. (laughs) We were on the sidelines of all this, but I felt bad for the stage designers, who went from stages designed for no jumping, to jumping, to double-jumping, and finally Devil Trigger mode flying.

How about the heroine, Trish?

Ohtsubo: We really pushed for Trish to be as sexy as possible, always thinking about how to make her butt stick out. (laughs) I understand she's also really popular overseas, where long, blonde hair is a guaranteed hit.

Hiraki: I struggled a lot with Trish's hair.

Ohtsubo: That was tough. Long hair is always tough. Near the end, the whole motion team was involved in doing her hair.



Hiraki: The airplane escape scene was a hell all its own.

Ohtsubo: We were all screaming, "Cut your damn hair!" (laughs)



Because you were all working together near the end?

Ohtsubo: Yes. Inserting joints into her strands of hair was a task that we brute-forced through with all the manpower we had available. It was a nightmare.

Can you talk about the rival character, Nelo Angelo?

Hiraki: For Nelo Angelo's motions, we started with Dante as a template and added a number of new moves to make him really come alive. Then there's his Summoned Swords. He doesn't have guns like Dante does, but he needs projectile attacks, right? The staff discussed this at the time and came up with a solution. I thought it was a great idea. Projectiles that didn't require any motion work! Great. (laughs)



Ohtsubo: It was also fun gameplay-wise. Just a really good concept.

Hiraki: Working with the guns was hard. While the lower half of the body is walking around, the upper half has to be able to aim in any direction, lock on and off, shoot, etc. We also had to make sure the legs and torso blended together right, which became a problem when we got a call from the programmers saying, "The left arm looks weird when he's walking to the right and shooting downward." That threw me for a loop. (laughs) Sometimes we'd do our part, boot up the gameplay, and the motion would come out completely wonky. So the process involved a lot of fine-tuning and trial-and-error. If only Dante could have just used Summoned Swords as well. (laughs)

Finally, there's Mundus.

Ohtsubo: Mundus is the big bad guy who killed Dante's mother. Given that he's someone who Dante personally has a grudge against, I was sure we'd be making him into this really hateable character, but visually, he looks like a god. He purposely makes himself look godlike, so we took that to heart by making his silhouette godly and majestic. His fingers each have their own joints, so we had to make them all movable. His is a model that can actually express his personality through his hands, so we made sure to clearly show the motions of his fingers during each of his attacks, like when he's trying to link the sigils. The crumbling second form is meant to show how pitiful he really is in contrast with the majesty of that first form. His body falls apart as he gets more desperate. That's what we were going for.



✦ INFLUENTIAL AD-LIBBING BY THE SOFTWARE GUYS

Out of all your work on "DMC", what are you most satisfied with? What left a real impression?

Ohtsubo: My best memories are of the minor enemy "Blade". It had been around since before the title even became "DMC". Before the change, when the game was still "RE 4", Blades were B.O.W.'s [bio organic weapons]; half-man and half-beast, with no shield or helmet. After the change, though, Blades went from being B.O.W.'s to demons, so we gave them shields and helmets, and Kamiya-san said, "Make sure they can fire their claws." (laughs) That was key. So I started working on their "claw missile" attack. That was the point when I started really liking these guys.



Hiraki: Kamiya-san told us to make the claw-firing look painful.

Ohtsubo: Right. Well, when they're actually shooting them, they're full of energy, but they're supposed to look pained when growing their claws back. The "Frost" enemy uses the same technique, but because it's a more advanced form of the Blade, it just looks cool when growing its claws back; it's not actually in any pain.

Hiraki: In the early days of development, it didn't take long for me to get a grasp of the overall image and really start liking the game. When it came to the fighting motions for Ifrit, I was imagining Dante as the protagonist from "Cobra", with light footwork and quick boxing moves, so I started designing his moves that way. But then Kamiya-san told me that each hit should be really heavy - Bam! Bam! - and that Dante should almost strike a pose after each move, so I revised what I'd done. I had come from a pixel art background, so I was more than used to designing those heavy-hitting moves. I'd thought



that lighter movements would match up better with polygon graphics, but then I was told to make it more manga-like. That realization and the course-correction that followed is something I'll always remember. "Bayonetta" was the same way. I guess some things never change. (laughs)

Ohtsubo: In animation terms, it's like the difference between Western full animation and Japanese limited animation.

Hiraki: I definitely think limited animation allows for stronger contrast. Character poses are always so cool.

Incidentally, which style does each of you prefer?

Hiraki: Both have their own benefits. Recently I've tried to make use of the good aspects of both. We'll get basic movements via motion capture, which is great for motions that would take a lot of time to create otherwise, like the shifting of body weight or the wiggling of appendages. While preserving that essence, I might use limited animation-style editing to formulate striking gameplay that feels good. In this way, both styles can be utilized for what they do well.

Ohtsubo: Exactly. I completely agree with Hiraki. Both can be good.

Hiraki: Sometimes I'm asked to give private feedback on action games in development, and I often end up thinking that the characters' motions need polishing. (laughs) Especially in Western games. The ideas are fresh, but the games just don't feel good. They can often be improved by including a variety of solid poses that flow seamlessly from one to the next.

"Enemy Step" is another signature move in "DMC". Whose idea was that one?

Hiraki: When does that come into play?

Ohtsubo: When indeed. (laughs)

Hiraki: During the Sargasso secret mission, right? That's when you can start using enemies as platforms. Everyone kind of threw whatever they wanted into "DMC". (laughs) The software guys were the worst. They'd take our discarded motions and make them into new moves. (laughs) Like, you know how holding down the button during High Time makes you leap into the air? They just went and decided that on their own. Kamiya-san saw one of their pictures of Dante striking a pose on the ground before shooting into the air, loved it, gave them the green light, and then told me to redo the whole pose, saying, "Hey, Hiraki-kun. Make the motion look like this." And, well, I think the statute of limitations is up, so I can admit this... but you know Dante's "deflecting" motion? The software guys made it by simply reversing the basic sword swipe animation. They said, "Use this temporary motion for now and make the proper one later on," but... I never did! (laughs) Nobody complained about the "temporary" version, so I just went with that. (laughs) In the end, the one who blew my cover was Nara [Hiroyuki Nara; see page 204], who worked on "DMC 2" and "3". He said, "Dante doesn't actually have a deflecting motion..." (laughs) Sorry, I never made one. (laughs) Anyway, the software guys' ad-libbing often got priority. But apparently, thanks to their capriciousness, Capcom had a hell of a time putting out "Devil May Cry HD Collection". The backup data they had to use only contained the original resources, which the software guys had tinkered with at their own discretion throughout the development process. So if that backup data had been used as-is, it would have resulted in a totally different game than the one that was released. (laughs)

Ohtsubo: That was terrible. (laughs) They had that backup data, but it was essentially a different game.

Hiraki: When it came to the action in "DMC", the software guys would ad-lib an idea they thought was cool, and if Kamiya-san liked it, we'd have to create the motions for it... or not. (laughs) That's just how it was. So it's really impossible to say with any certainty who came up with Enemy Step, and when, where, why, or how they did it.

Ohtsubo: Speaking of ad-libbing, there was originally only going to be a single Sin Scissors variant.

Hiraki: Sin Scissors was a really minor enemy during early development meetings. It was a very simple one for us motion artists, because it floats around without ever touching the ground. Floating enemies are easy to manipulate and program, and the software guys could even prescribe whatever they wanted. So Sin Scissors wouldn't take a lot of work, and what work there was would be simple. Or so we thought...

Ohtsubo: But then Sin Scissors was split into several variations, each with their own motions. So we started specializing them with signature moves... At first I thought it would be one enemy using four different moves, but then we ended up making four whole different enemies: Sin Scissors, Sin Scythe, Death Scissors, and Death Scythe. (laughs) We really earned our keep with the movements of their translucent cloaks. (laughs)

Hiraki: That was a labor of love for the software guys in charge of the enemies.

Ohtsubo: The software guys had a lot of influence. But it wasn't just them; everyone on the whole "DMC" team was always pitching ideas, and Kamiya-san had the final say.

Hiraki: Kamiya-san is the type to get excited and include just about anything, and that mood of his spread to the rest of the team. Everyone was always trying to throw in ideas they thought were interesting or cool. ...Speaking of which, QTEs [quick time events] were included in the early gameplay samples, yeah?

Ohtsubo: I think Kamiya-san's specification documents had them, yeah.

Hiraki: There were going to be a bunch of QTEs, like when Dante just barely dodges the pursuing Phantom. But we were... a bit frazzled at the time, so we begged and pleaded to have no QTEs. (laughs) That was just one gameplay element that was never realized, mostly because of time constraints.

✦ THE DESIRE TO GIVE "DMC" ANOTHER SHOT

The methods for making 3D models have really changed since the days of the first "DMC" game. Can the same be said for motion work?

Hiraki: Up until a certain point, increasing the number of joints was all the rage, but I think that trend has calmed. But all those added joints aren't ones that motion artists have to work on directly. Motion artists work with around 20 joints at minimum. Once those are finished, everything else is supplementary. Today's polygon models are much more connected, like a single unit. Try to twist them in a certain direction, and - as if you were twisting a pipe - they'll contort into unnatural positions. All those extra joints are there to prevent that distortion, but that's something that happens automatically.

Ohtsubo: Also, hands and feet with distinct, articulated digits. Depending on the game, hands and feet can be simplified or extremely detailed.

Hiraki: But essentially, not much has changed.

Today's game consoles are much more advanced, and developers can do so much more with the scope of a game's presentation. Given that fact, are there any particular motions or scenes from "DMC" that you wish you could try doing again?

Hiraki: I think we accomplished everything we wanted to at the time, but yes, I would redo everything. Honestly, if I had to choose an aspect of "DMC" to redo, it'd be "all of it". I'd love to do a new reboot. In that sense, it's hard to pick just one thing. We've really improved a lot since then, yeah?

Ohtsubo: Definitely.

Hiraki: Looking back, our old motions feel really rigid. (laughs)

Ohtsubo: It's downright embarrassing. (laughs)

Hiraki: I took a peek at "Devil May Cry HD Collection" when it came out and my jaw dropped. (laughs) Maybe it's just rose-tinted glasses, but when I look at the original... How many years ago was this?

Ohtsubo: About 12.

Hiraki: Right? Motion was incredibly rigid back then. It's embarrassing to look at now. So I'd love to try again and make something that doesn't have to rely on nostalgia to make you think it still looks good. Think that's possible now?

Ohtsubo: Yeah, I do.

Hiraki: But then again, after just a few more years...

Ohtsubo: Even something made now would look shockingly bad. (laughs)

Hiraki: C'mon, why do you gotta put it that way? ...But you're right. (laughs)

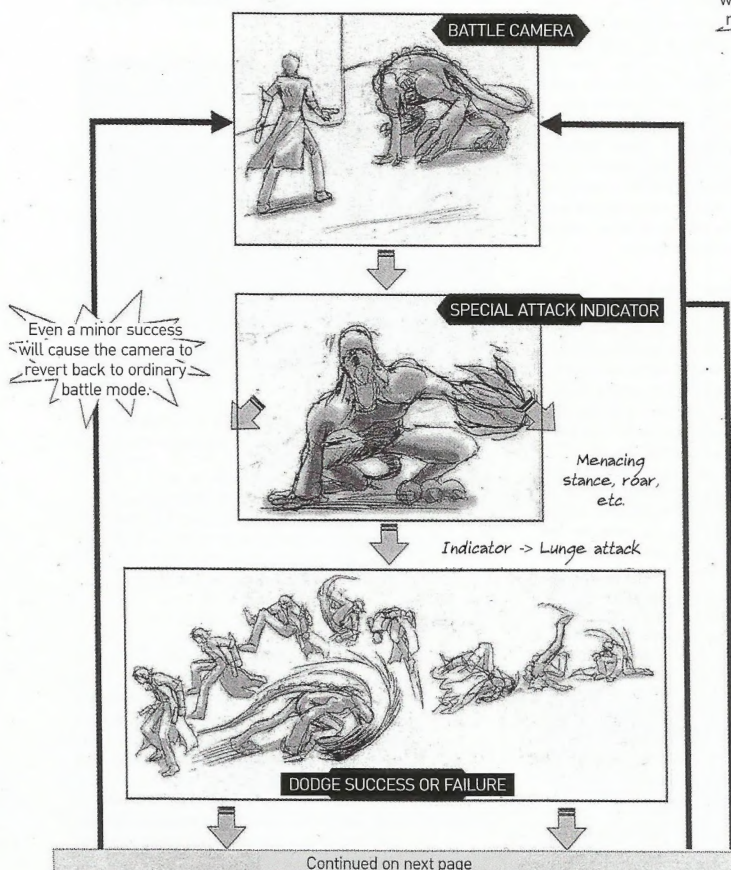
Thank you for your time. (laughs)

"DMC (1)" QTE Specs Document (Unused)

BIOHAZARD 4

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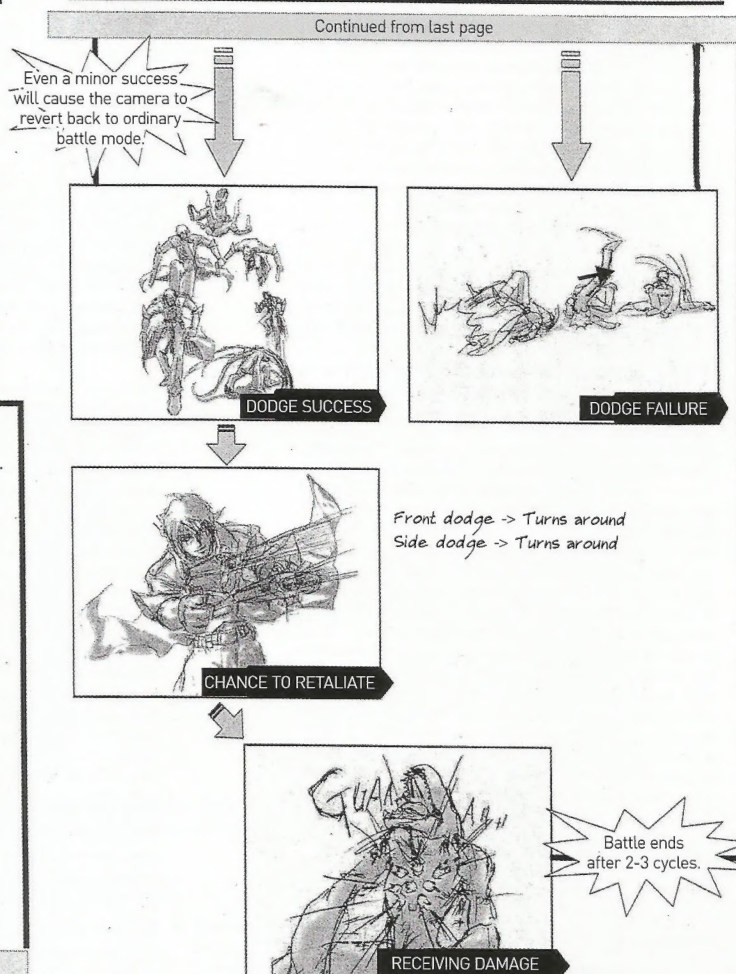
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BIOHAZARD 4

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Interview

MISSION.2 ● THE MODELER IN CHARGE OF BOTH THE HUMAN AND DEMON FORMS

SAWAKI TAKEYASU HAS WORKED IN MANY DIFFERENT FIELDS SINCE HIS CAREER BEGAN. HERE, HE GIVES US A LOOK AT HIS BACKGROUND AND EXPLAINS TO US HOW WORKING ON "DEVIL MAY CRY" WAS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE THAT PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO SHOW HIS POINT OF-VIEW TO THE WORLD.

✦ A LUCKY CAREER BREAK

Takeyasu-san, can you recount how you came to be involved with "Devil May Cry" [hereinafter referred to as "DMC"]?

Takeyasu: "DMC" was the first title I was involved with at Capcom. As for the events that led to that... I attended the Osaka University of Arts [hereinafter referred to as "OUA"], but as graduation approached, I wasn't really inspired to start a career. (laughs) I hated the idea of becoming a salaryman, so I put off the search for a job. It was around that time that some of my friends came to me and said, "We know a company that'd be perfect for you," and they lent me "Resident Evil 2" [hereinafter referred to as "RE 2"]. I played it, and I was shocked. It was amazing how far games had come. I played "RE (1)" after that, and then I applied to Capcom. They put me on Development Team #4. So I got a job at Capcom just three months after first playing an "RE" title. (laughs) A lucky career break, to be sure, and my job search had started really late at that. Most people begin looking in the middle of junior year, or the start of junior year at the earliest, but I started in April of my senior year. I got my tentative offer in May or June, and by July I was filling out the paperwork. Because Capcom is an Osaka-based company, I even had a special opportunity to look at some of their games when they were showcased at OUA. It was then that I first heard about Capcom's applicant-screening process, but I'd already missed the deadline. So I checked their home page, found the "General Applications" section, and - even though I wasn't a new graduate - sent in my application anyway. Next came an information session for new employees, where they explained the company and the jobs. I was really lucky. "Onimusha" was at the height of its popularity when I joined Development Team #4, and we often spotted Takeshi Kaneshiro-san [a popular actor in Japan and other Asian countries] in the building. Most of the 17 newcomers were divided up between the "Onimusha" development teams; only myself and one other individual were sent to Development Team #4, which was working on "RE 4".

Had you requested to join the "RE" team?

Takeyasu: No, no. I wasn't at a level to be making requests. I'd just been sitting at a tiny desk at the end of the development hallway when a scout showed up. "You're going here," he said. The "Breath of Fire" team had been training me, but then I was whisked off to the world of zombies. (laughs) That sure was exciting, because it'd been less than a year since I played "RE 2" and "RE (1)", and now I was being sent to work on "RE 4". What happened to "3"? They told me about how the PS2 was coming out, which only confused me more. PS2!? What's that? Anyway, I was so happy about my placement, I never wanted to leave the company. I spent a lot of nights sleeping at the offices instead of going home. I know that's not allowed anymore, but at the time I quite literally lived at the offices for about half a year. (laughs)

Looking back, what kind of team was the "DMC" team?

Takeyasu: In short? A team that wanted to "change the world". Without that team, I probably would have quit Capcom and looked at other companies. But that team made me say, "I'll never consider quitting again." Simply put, it was a great team. They took everything to the limit. They worked us really hard, but that's how you make great

things. This team was amazing. In later years, when I was putting together my own team, I tried to model it after that first "DMC" one.

What was it that spurred the change from "RE 4" to "DMC"?

Takeyasu: From what I can recall, it was Mikami-san [Shinji Mikami; known for the "RE" series] and the higher-ups at the company who judged, "This doesn't really feel like an 'RE' title." At the time, both "RE 4" (later "DMC") and the remake of "RE (1)" for the Nintendo GameCube were in production. It was like, "This is 'RE'. What you guys are making is not." I remember Kamiya-san [Hideki Kamiya; known for the "DMC" series] angrily saying, in a meeting, "I told you not to use zombies." (laughs) I was just a newcomer at the time, so all I could do was stand off to the side, smiling and nodding the whole time.

✦ A RESEARCH TRIP RECOMMENDED BY A NEWCOMER

Do you have any good anecdotes from your time on the "DMC" team?

Takeyasu: The time when I went on a research trip abroad is a good one. The PS2 isn't a system that can produce a ton of polygons, so even with the full CG, you want to keep the model data that has to be read to a minimum. This can be done by shaving down the polygon models and using textures [CG add-ons to the polygon models], but that of course requires good textures. The goal at the time was realism, so the ultimate textures actually came from photographs. "Old European castles" was a big theme in the game, so we needed pictures of those old castles. I was still new at the time, but without even thinking about the budget, I blurted out, "Well, why not just go and take some pictures?" (laughs) The person in charge of the backgrounds in "DMC" definitely preferred to have pictures, so he pushed for my idea, which is how the trip became a reality. He also happened to be the one who pulled me onto the "DMC" team. It's safe to say that without him, I would've been lost at Capcom.

We tested the process by first trying to build Osaka City Central Public Hall [another name for Nakanoshima Public Hall; a cultural landmark in Japan]. We took photos of the hall and pasted them as textures onto the CG model. It was a huge success. With this sample backing us up, the team was on board with the idea of a research trip to Europe, so I brought the proposal to Mikami-san. "Great. You do it," he said, and suddenly I found myself going abroad for research within my first six months at the company. I only have a faint recollection of this, but I believe that at the time, the company was taking too long to furnish the money for the trip, so Mikami-san paid for my expenses out of his own pocket. (laughs) I was teased a lot over that. (laughs) For instance, people said, "You're considered a bad boy around here for running off on that trip before the paperwork was finished, so you should look the part. At least show up to work wearing sunglasses." I'm still a little bitter about how they coerced me into wearing those sunglasses to work. (laughs) Mikami-san's help was essential, but the timing of it all was just perfect. It was an age where we were aiming for realism but couldn't use polygons to do it.

Going on that research trip with Kamiya-san was an unforgettable experience. I joined a great company, went on this amazing trip, acquired some quality materials, and got to use them in the world's best game. That was how I saw my

own personal success story at the time, and every step along the way was thanks to Capcom.

✦ A MODELER AT HEART

On "DMC", you were both a modeler and a monster designer. Can you tell us what it was like dealing with both of those responsibilities?

Takeyasu: I'm a modeler at heart. I only started drawing when "RE 4" became "DMC". When the "RE (1)" remake and "DMC" teams split, the monster designers all migrated to the remake team. So we were in need of artists all of a sudden, and someone asked, "Hey. Can you draw?" I wanted to draw, so I accepted the responsibility, but I'd be remiss to call myself a "designer" for "DMC". I was more like a modeler who also did some drawings. Any and all designs I did really came in the final year. Until then I was purely a modeler, and as a newcomer, my drawings were utter crap compared to the pro artists'. Capcom really has some amazing artists in that sense. It's a massive understatement to say they're "good". (laughs) It's a company with a lot of talent under its roof. Also, it wasn't like anyone said, "We could really use some of Takeyasu's designs." More like, "There's no one else to do it, so why don't you?" That's not to say it wasn't a wonderful opportunity. We were understaffed and my drawings were passable, so I got the job. Nothing special. Not compared to someone like Tsuchibayashi-san [Makoto Tsuchibayashi; see page 5], who was scouted and is practically a star in the gaming world, much like Shinkawa-san [Yoji Shinkawa; known for the "Metal Gear Solid" series].

Do any of the demons in "DMC" have noticeable traces of their origins as B.O.W.'s for "RE"?

Takeyasu: As far as design goes, Beelzebub was completely unchanged. However, its polygon count was much lower than when the game was "RE 4". The same goes for Blade, minus the armor. It was originally a Hunter for "RE". You know how Phantom has flames running through its body? In "RE 4", that was going to be blood instead. Also, if you just make Griffon a bit more ragged-looking, that's basically his "RE 4" design. As soon as we switched to "DMC", we were told to patch up our monsters. Give them some first aid, if you will. They were originally zombie-like creatures, so we had to extract that zombie virus and make them healthy again. (laughs)

I'd like to ask about the designs of the major demons in "DMC". Let's start with Phantom.

Takeyasu: Phantom was designed by Tsuchibayashi-san, and it was polished by Tatsumi-san [Nobuhiro Tatsumi; known for the "DMC" series], who was mentoring me at the time. So I see it as a creation made by my teachers, in a way.

Can you talk about Griffon?

Takeyasu: That one was designed by Yoshimura-san [Kenichiro Yoshimura; known for "Okami"]. I was the one who ended up putting the final details on Griffon, though - like the sort of gross-looking spots where you can see its flesh. I was more modeler than designer in that capacity, though, as I simply received the order to work on it. Same goes for the process of "healing" it from the zombie virus. Then came the finishing touches, like the feathers in the back to make it look more dragon-like.

SAWAKI TAKEYASU

Worked as a modeler - and in the latter half of production, a monster designer - on "DEVIL MAY CRY". His other Capcom titles include "STEEL BATTALION" and "OKAMI". Outside of Capcom, he has worked on "EL SHADDAI" among other titles. He's currently the representative director for crim. In addition to illustrating, he currently devotes his time to teaching.

How about Nightmare?

Takeyasu: I actually had nothing to do with Nightmare. But I learned a lot by watching from the sidelines; in particular, the fact that non-designers could even make something like Nightmare. The most important element of its design is how it wriggles around and transforms. The guys who made Nightmare were motion artist Yamaguchi-san [Takaaki Yamaguchi; known for "Okami"] and programmer Karatsuma-san [Katsutoshi Karatsuma; known for "Okami"]. Those two worked hard at it and came up with a great design based on their own logical reasoning rather than a sense of intuition, which us artists would use.

Can you talk about Mundus?

Takeyasu: I was responsible for Mundus after they gave me the design drawings. Mundus is the only boss that I took care of from start to finish. Incidentally, there wasn't originally going to be a cutscene between the space and ground portions of the Mundus fight. Kamiya-san and I decided to implement that, and he directed it. Kamiya-san was able to persuade the programmers to include it on the basis that I'd gone off and designed it on my own. That was one of the times I really felt a sense of unity with Kamiya-san. There wasn't much time left, so after he was done planning it out, Kamiya-san basically said, "The rest is up to you." Kamiya-san had actually made media appearances around the time I was playing "RE 2", so having him entrust me with such a task was kind of amazing. I'm really glad we forged that connection right near the end of development on "DMC".



What about the rival character, Nelo Angelo?

Takeyasu: Tsuchibayashi-san designed him, so Nelo Angelo is another character that feels like one of my teacher's creations. Nelo Angelo came about because we wanted to have more monsters but simply didn't have time to start from the ground up, so we used Dante's pre-existing framework and motions to create Nelo Angelo. In that sense, too, it's something that my teacher created, and I got an up-close chance to watch him work. But it's not like I was contributing my opinions. I could never have said something like, "I think this looks a bit off." (laughs) The response would have been, "You cheeky brat. I've come from the demon world itself," and that would have been the end of it. (laughs) This was the man who made Leon in "RE 2", after all. He was like a god to me, so I would have died before voicing any suggestions.

Are there any other demon characters that really left an impression on you, Takeyasu-san?

Takeyasu: Sin Scissors, for sure. It came about when one day, all of a sudden, we weren't making "RE" anymore but rather "DMC", and there was a need for non-



"RE" characters. That was when I started thinking about how to fix up Griffon, and while doing so, I came up with my first design that was all my own: Sin Scissors. The staff agreed that it didn't look like an "RE" character at all and that it really fit the "DMC" world. What's more, the programmers and motion artists said I had done them a real kindness by creating an enemy that floated above the ground. In the end, though, it wasn't actually much of a kindness. Not knowing much about programming myself, I asked the impossible by designing Sin Scissors to have a transparent body that could float through walls along with solid scissors that had collision detection. (laughs) There was no way it could be done. (laughs) But I had my very own monster design in Sin Scissors, and I can really see my personal design sense in it. More than anything, I try to make non-confusing designs. My monsters are simple and clear from the moment you see them. Sin Scissors is just a guy holding scissors, with horns and hooves (like Dante's final Devil Trigger form). It's simple, but it leaves an impression. Trish is another one that impressed me. She was the first human model I ever made. I started with the base made by Tsuchibayashi-san and worked using Kamiya-san's specific alteration requests. Mikami-san was really worried. "Can Takeyasu-san actually make a human model?" He scrutinized my work to no end. Nonetheless, I went ahead and did the work as best I could.



What did you watch out for when modeling for "DMC"? Were there any specific design points or elements you favored?

Takeyasu: With the PS2, we didn't have the luxury of using polygons for characters' entire bodies. That's not the case today, but back then, we followed the "all your eggs in one basket" doctrine, which meant focusing on one part of the model in the hopes that the rest of it would appear to have also been done with polygons. Usually

that involved going overboard on face details. I have strong memories of doing that a lot. For example, Griffon's feathers were very important, so we spared no polygon expense on them. As a result, Griffon itself was bigger than expected, and its feet became clearly visible. I didn't think its back would ever be seen, so I shifted the polygon resources for its back into its feet. One day, I was watching gameplay and was surprised to see Dante riding on Griffon's back. Even though its back polygons were now in its feet... (laughs)

It seems that you would first create clay models of your designs for the demons in "DMC". Can you speak about that technique a bit?

Takeyasu: Once I had decided to go with a certain design, I needed a sort of blueprint with different viewpoints of the model (front, back, side, etc.). But there was no time to draw that, so I thought it made sense to just create a physical model instead. That's why I started using clay. We also needed all those realistic textures at the time, so I was able to simply take pictures of the clay models' textures and make use of them. What better way to achieve realistic textures than to physically create them? Blade's textures were also made in clay, by hand. Its scales were supposed to all be connected, but achieving that kind of coordination in a design is difficult when it is drawn as a picture. A physical model, on the other hand, is perfect for that purpose, and I could just take a picture of the texture when I was done. Part of me just liked making them, though. Besides, after working so hard, why not do it? (laughs) When they were discussing making the design works book, I was asked to make a model of Frost, which I did after development was over. There was also talk of making Frost into an actual marketable figure, but that never got Kamiya-san's approval, so it didn't happen. It would have been awesome if a figure I made was actually sold to the public. (laughs)

✦ THE "AIM FOR THE WORLD" PERSPECTIVE

Finally, what did you gain from your time with the "DMC" team? Are there any particular experiences that you've made use of in other work since then?

Takeyasu: This game really changed my whole outlook on life. It taught me that no matter how much of an amateur you think you are, you have to aim for the world. My experiences with Development Team #4 even taught me about how to live my life. At ordinary companies, people worry about salaries and promotions, but more creative jobs encourage you to pursue that sense of freedom and not care so much about the particulars of the organization. That's something a salaryman will never have. I'm forever grateful to Capcom for making me figure out who I really am and what kind of life I want to lead. It was such a good experience that honestly, if I had the chance to go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing. There's no other company like it. I think Capcom is still doing well. I'm still impressed by their current titles. I mostly teach now, and when my students ask me what the good companies are, I always recommend Capcom. When I experienced that perspective change I mentioned earlier, a big part of that was understanding how small the world really is. There are always so many capable people working at Capcom that I'm convinced they must be doing something right.

Thank you for your time.

Interview

MISSION.3 ● THE CHARACTER-MAKING KEY ARTISTS

THE PEOPLE WHO WORK ON CHARACTERS' DESIGNS, FORMS, AND MOVEMENTS ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT THEY DO. WE GOT A CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH THREE OF THE INDIVIDUALS AT THE CENTER OF THE DEVELOPMENT TEAMS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD ENTRIES IN THE "DEVIL MAY CRY" SERIES.

✦ CONNECTION WITH THE "DEVIL MAY CRY" SERIES

How did each of you come to be involved with "Devil May Cry [hereinafter referred to as "DMC"] 2" and "DMC 3"?

Ikeno: Capcom had traditionally been split into two main pillars: the arcade division and the console division. But the PS2's increased processing power and a change in the nature of Capcom's arcade game market meant a company-wide shift of human resources from arcade to console. With the company's big hits at the time, like "Resident Evil" [hereinafter referred to as "RE"] and "DMC", many of the arcade fighting game teams were switched over to teams making games for the home consoles. These former arcade division employees were put in charge of the "DMC" sequels. I was working for an independent studio when the "DMC 2" team asked if I would join the project. So I was hired to do character design, monster design, and some stage design.

So the "DMC 2" team had a lot of former arcade division staff, then?

Ikeno: That's right. More specifically, people who had mostly worked on fighting games. They were mixed in with a number of others who had worked on "DMC (1)". The producer was Tanaka-san [Tsuyoshi Tanaka; known for "DMC 2" and "DMC 3"], who had only just joined Capcom. Funamizu-san [Noritaka Funamizu; known for the "Monster Hunter" series] basically gave the "DMC 2" team free reign, encouraging us to do what we wanted. At first, the protagonist wasn't even going to be Dante, but rather some guy with a green jacket. Looking back at the game's fundamentals, like the visuals and overall designs, we didn't take the parts of "DMC (1)" that the players really loved into account well enough, so the second game felt very artificial. I think our attitude was a little too much "We're gonna make it how we want to". There wasn't enough recognition of the fact that "2" was only happening because of the success of "1". Dante's sudden change into a more taciturn character was the producer's decision, because he didn't like the joke-cracking wiseass Dante from "1". The team agreed, and that was the direction we went in. It was set about ten years after the events of "1" and starred a tight-lipped Dante who was around 30 years old. His sudden silence almost seemed to imply that something terrible had happened between the events of "1" and "2". [laughs] Going along with that theme, we also designed him to look more grown-up.

Nara: The final days of development on "DMC 2" were wild... [laughs] I joined the team right near the end, as the deadline was approaching, and it's no exaggeration to say that every available staff member was mobilized. They even recruited non-team members such as myself. So I didn't really "join" the team... it's more like I was conscripted. [laughs]

Ikeno: So it's fair to say you didn't have much to do with the title? Joining right at the end and all... [laughs]

Nara: Something like that. [laughs] "DMC 2" just yanked out all these members from other teams who had been busy working on their own projects. The whole thing left a real impression on me. Anyway, that's how I got involved with "DMC 2"...

Ikawa: You might say you were dragged into it. [laughs]

Nara: I personally felt sorry for the "DMC 2" team. I remember feeling quite strongly that I didn't even do a good job of helping to finish the game. There was a lot that I felt had been left undone in "DMC 2", so when talk of "DMC 3" started, I requested to join that team.

Ikawa: I joined the "DMC 3" team shortly after finishing up on "Monster Hunter" [hereinafter referred to as "MH"]. I was all set to just be one of many modelers, but apparently something happened that prompted Nara to call me up with a better offer. [laughs]

Nara: I knew we needed some good talent if "DMC 3" was to succeed, which is why I put him in charge. [laughs]

Ikawa: Right. That was the first time I was made the lead modeler on a project.

Ikeno: As for my involvement with "DMC 3"...

Nara: Can't remember, huh? [laughs]

Ikeno: Well, "DMC 2" had just wrapped up, and Itsuno had all prepared to get started on "DMC 3". I vaguely remember him asking me to join the team. ...Probably. [laughs]

✦ PRIORITIZING THE CINEMATIC, MANGA-LIKE DIRECTION

What were the key design points for Dante in the more hard-boiled "DMC 2"?

Ikeno: "DMC" was originally derived from the "RE" series, but my interpretation of its visual style was more aligned with action-packed Hollywood B-movies. That's why I've always approached the games' design from a more cinematic perspective as opposed to a manga-based one, like making a live-action adaptation of a comic. So rather than actually being manga, it's just "manga-like"; the "-like", of course, being there because it's not really a comic. With this "cinematic, manga-like direction" in mind, it's important not to go overboard with elaborate clothing designs and details, emphasizing clothes that people might actually wear in reality instead. But there were a lot of team members - myself included - who had come from an arcade background and therefore had little experience utilizing those more realistic resources. Our textures were mostly handmade, so compared to "DMC (1)", the visuals and essence of "DMC 2" are more drawing-like. With "DMC 3", I took the same care in going for that cinematic look.

How about the heroine, Lucia?

Ikeno: Chun-Li in "Street Fighter II" is a good example of this, but I think that when it comes to lead, female character design, Capcom tends to prioritize fighting ability over attractiveness. Cute female characters with nothing else to offer besides their looks are run-of-the-mill, so we take care to avoid designing characters like that. That drove us to try and make Lucia a character who can really fight. I tend to go overboard with that, though, as many of my characters aren't exactly scene-stealers. [laughs] I think it goes without saying that Lucia is a good example of that. Design-wise, you've got her standout red hair (like Dante's coat) and the white cloak that makes her hair pop. The rest of her colors are somewhat neutral. But I believe that characters are far more than just their visual appearance.

It also matters what they do, what they say, how they act, their expressions, etc. All of that can have a large effect on their likability as characters. Sadly, the characters in "DMC 2" - Dante included - are fairly tight-lipped and never really take drastic action. [laughs] I feel like if we had included a scene that showed how the standoffish Lucia is actually kind at heart, she could have been a more appealing character. But that sweet side never emerged - only the prickly one was ever shown. [laughs] That kind of thing is hard to show comprehensively in any kind of performance; theatrical, cinematic, or otherwise.

Did you consciously design Lucia to look like someone from South America?

Ikeno: "DMC" never specifies a particular real-world setting, but it's clear that Dante's devil-exterminating business is located in some foreign country. In "DMC 2", he heads off to an isolated island. Lucia is supposedly descended from a long line of indigenous people on the island. More than that, though, we wanted a strong contrast with the heroine of "DMC (1)", Trish, and making Lucia a different race was an easy way to make that happen. We never decided on "South America" specifically. I think she might even have some Asian heritage in her. Besides, there are many different peoples who live in South America, no? They say that as races continue to mix, we're going to get even more beautiful people in the world. Lucia was created with that thought in mind.

How about Matier?

Ikeno: Matier serves as a guardian. Given that Dante's a man, I thought it'd be better to complement him with an old woman (as opposed to an old man) and her daughter. That's about it. [laughs] She may be short, but she's a reliable woman who can use sorcery. Her strongest features are her face and the intensity of her stare, which is why I gave her those big, bug-like eyes.

It's clear that Arius is a villain just from looking at him.

Ikeno: Arius' aquiline nose is an homage to that of Lee Van Cleef, who plays the villainous sheriff in the film "For a Few Dollars More". I think that feature is actually emphasized even more in the game than in his early artwork. I love making villains with strongly-defined facial features. He looks quite convalescent in the game, with his eerily pale skin. I gave him a pure white outfit and sort of a noble look to imply that he's compensating for a deep, dark evil that he harbors within. His color palette is also meant to contrast with Dante's.

The hidden costumes in "DMC 2" were part of a collaboration with Diesel, right?

Ikeno: That was because Tanaka-san, the producer, used to work for them. It was a collaboration that made good use of his last job. People on both sides talked at the time and felt that "DMC 2" and Diesel's visual styles would work well together and could be quite appealing to the casual audience. We were asked to design a belt for the collaboration, and I had the privilege of making the buckle. Seeing Dante and Lucia wearing Diesel fashion on-screen was very cool. There's something neat about watching them run through the game's story while wearing those clothes. It reminds me of "RE" in a way. [laughs]

JUN IKAWA

Supervised all the models in "DEVIL MAY CRY 3" and was in charge of Dante, Vergil, and all the Devil Trigger weapons. He has also worked on the "MONSTER HUNTER" series, "STREET FIGHTER III", and "DRAGON'S DOGMA".

DAIGO IKENO

Served as a character designer for "DEVIL MAY CRY 2" and as a designer and art director for "DEVIL MAY CRY 3". He has also worked on "DRAGON'S DOGMA", "STREET FIGHTER III" and "IV", and the "DARKSTALKERS" series.

HIROYUKI NARA

Joined the "DEVIL MAY CRY 2" team near the very end of development to work on Trish. He also supervised all animation on "DEVIL MAY CRY 3" and worked on the motions for Dante, Vergil, and the other main characters. His other work has been primarily focused on multiplayer fighting games.



✦ TAKING "DMC 3" IN A "CRAZY" DIRECTION

I'd like to start talking about "DMC 3", but before that, I suspect that many of our readers aren't fully aware of what a "modeler" does. Ikawa-san, could you explain the work you did on "DMC 3" in specific terms?

Ikawa: Basically, Ikeno would give me a design for Dante or some monster, and I'd start modeling it. I started by combining polygons into basic 3D parts. After combining them, I pasted images called textures onto the surfaces to complete the 3D model. Then Ikeno would look at it and tell me how it was all wrong. (laughs) He'd spend about an hour telling me everything that was wrong with the model before chasing me off.

Ikeno: A whole hour? I don't think so. (laughs)

Ikawa: There were times when you'd sit there in silence for a good 20 minutes. Anyway, after that sort of exchange, we'd pass the finished model to Nara and the other motion artists, who would bring the character alive by making it move.

Nara: A given character's individuality and personality can come off very differently depending on how his or her model is made to move, so we're very careful about that. All motions take into account the character's particular personality.

You guys went from the "sullen DMC 2" to the "showy DMC 3" - a complete change in mood. When it came time to work on "DMC 3", what aspects were you especially mindful of?

Nara: We were told at the time to imbue "DMC 3" with a sort of young, wild craziness that hadn't been present in "DMC (1)". So even the motions of the swordplay have this rough-around-the-edges feel to them. We were careful to differentiate the overall vibe from "DMC (1)". That said, I was mindful of the legacy of "DMC (1)" from the start. The goal wasn't to make a completely different game, after all. The Dante of "DMC 3" would eventually grow up to be the Dante of "DMC (1)", so with that in mind, I just sort of turned back the clock on the first game's Dante and tried to imagine how a younger version of him would move around. That distinct difference in the overall "feel" was probably a result of our director being Itsuno-san. (laughs)

Ikeno: Director Itsuno certainly made his mark on the game, but in my opinion, film director Shimomura [Yuji Shimomura; a famous action movie director] was more influential than anyone else. Shimomura realized the extent to which Itsuno wanted "crazy", "flashy" action, so he gave input on how to direct Dante in that way. It's a product of their teaming up. But if you remove the cutscenes and just look at the gameplay, Dante probably doesn't seem that crazy. What happens in those cutscenes really has a huge effect on the fun factor for the rest of the game. When the "DMC 3" staff was first shown the cutscenes, we were all shocked. (laughs) I remember everyone saying, "Can we really do this?"

Nara: That's right. (laughs) The staff members were discussing how to interpret the whole "crazy" direction as far as what Dante should actually do, and then Shimomura showed us his storyboards. It'd be too much to say Dante was "rampaging", but he was certainly going wild. (laughs)

Ikawa: I had played "DMC (1)", missed out on "DMC 2", and joined the development team for "DMC 3". I had done modeling work on "MH", but "DMC 3" was only the second 3D game I worked on. Now that I had finally gotten that opportunity to actually make a game in the "DMC" series, I gave it my all, and I couldn't help but be mindful of the titles that had come before. So I was especially careful when making the throwback costume from "DMC (1)", but not too excited about making the base costume for "DMC 3".

Ikeno: I think everyone on the "DMC 2" team felt the same way Ikawa did for "DMC 3"; they were just giving it their all. That's why things fell apart in the middle... (laughs) I think we were mindful of making use of the things we learned from "DMC 2" in "DMC 3", but compared to "DMC 2", the third game was... Well, we'd lost a lot of our player base with "DMC 2"... so the goal with "DMC 3", which we were proud of, was to win back a lot of players. (laughs)

Ikawa: The people who worked on Dante's model in "DMC 2" also made him in "DMC 3". I only started work on the "DMC 3" Dante partway through development, but I didn't get the feeling that there was much attention paid to earlier titles when designing his "DMC 3" model. Maybe because the previous lead modeler was too conscious of not relying on past work?

✦ EXPRESSING CHARACTERS' INDIVIDUALITY

I'd like to ask about the design points for the main characters in "DMC 3". Let's start with Dante.

Ikeno: Itsuno is the type of person who's very clear about his vision, so the grand feud between the brothers was a key theme that arose early on. You could say that "DMC 3" is more about the characters than "DMC (1)" was, and we discussed how that could be achieved by looking back to an earlier time with a younger Dante. His "DMC 3" design sprang from that concept. Having Dante expose more skin was partly inspired by the live performances of Johnny's [originally the name of a Japanese boy band that was active in the 1960s, now an umbrella term for Japanese boy bands that specialize in exuberant stage performances]. The "nothing but a jacket" look is perfect for young, cool stage performers, no? So we were always going to have him "naked" under the jacket. We never wavered on that design element. For a while there was also a design that had the jacket closed in front, but we realized that would be a waste of Dante's incredible, chiseled abs. The red coat contrasts nicely with his sharp, lively body.

Ikawa: You can definitely feel the connection with the Dante in "DMC (1)". We just added a little bit of "crazy" to the elements of his personality that were explored there. Personally, I think a lot of time and energy went into Dante... There's his style, his weapons... just a lot that we had to make. We took great care to make a final version without any imperfections. I especially remember the Cerberus nunchaku. Those were annoying... Nunchaku aren't so bad if they just have two flails, but three was a whole different story. (laughs) That was awful. Getting the nunchaku-swinging motions via motion capture was no problem, but the weapon itself was impossible, so we just used normal nunchaku. That meant painstakingly creating the weapon motions by hand. The weapon itself is basically a ring with three nunchaku flails attached to it, which meant that there were a ton of motion fulcrums to worry about. (laughs)

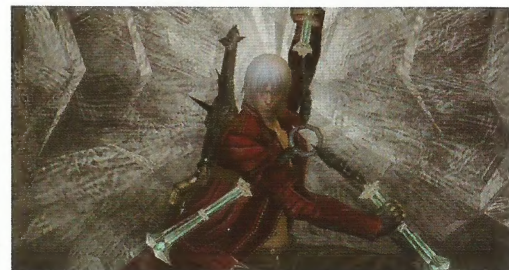
Ikeno: I would've axed the ring design if you'd only asked. (laughs)

Nara: Seriously? I wish I had. (laughs)

Ikawa: My job was to help you out whenever you ran into problems. (laughs)

Nara: If only I had a way to tell my past self that. That ring design's motion was a nightmare.

Ikawa: If I remember correctly, we filed a patent for that nunchaku design. We submitted it under the name "Sanchaku" ["san" means "three" in Japanese].



Ikeno: You could hold it by placing the third flail in your mouth. That'd work. We could lead the charge for a totally new fighting style. (laughs) But I don't think anyone followed up with that whole "Sanchaku" thing. (laughs)

Ikawa: For my part, I made adjustments to the base outfit made for Dante by the previous lead, who I mentioned earlier. Just a bit of brushing-up. There are a lot of alternate costumes in the game, so I had my hands full with that. I had thought we'd be able to obtain the "DMC (1)" outfits using that game's backup data, but some technical difficulties rendered them completely unusable, so the outfits had to be built again from scratch. (laughs) Dante's Devil Trigger form was especially tough. Everyone was shocked when they finally saw Kanekosan's [Kazuma Kaneko; known for "Shin Megami Tensei"] design come to life in the game.

Ikeno: That's what we were hoping for, though. (laughs) Design-wise, it wasn't that hard to model, right? And I think Kaneko-san's Devil Trigger form added a nice visual accent to the game. Although it kind of makes one think, "Is this really connected to 'DMC (1)' and 'DMC 2'?"

Ikawa: Right. Ikeno, you told me to make it fit more with the "DMC" series by lightly drawing in

some blood vessels. Those minor additions made it look more organic than the original design.

Ikeno: And yet you only gave me about one-third of what I was imagining. (laughs) I really wanted it to be fine-tuned even more, but if we had gone overboard, there would have been no point in asking for a design from Kaneko-san in the first place. That's how we settled on the design that was actually implemented.

Ikawa: Each weapon was also supposed to change in Devil Trigger mode, right? Kaneko-san only provided the normal weapon designs, so I thought you were going to take care of that, Ikeno. But I never got those designs from you. (laughs)

Ikeno: Really? (laughs) I remember drawing a whole bunch.

Ikawa: I ended up doing all the work for that. (laughs)

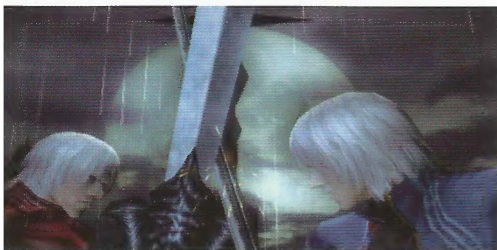
Ikeno: Seriously? (laughs) I must have never gotten the official order. (laughs) Maybe the paperwork never went through.

Ikawa: You're saying I didn't file the right documents? (laughs) Anyway, as requested, Devil Trigger Dante has weapon designs all his own. Vergil does too, which was rough. Fitting all seven weapons in with the memory available was also a challenge that left me frazzled. I actually made a special wallpaper image that is awarded for beating the game. It's an homage to Super Sentai series. I call it "Devil Trigger Sentai".



Let's move on to Dante's twin brother, Vergil.

Ikeno: The opening cutscene shows them fighting in the rain, but Vergil's normal hairstyle is ruined by the rain, and you can barely tell who's who. We were specifically ordered to do it that way. So Vergil's hair was actually tweaked to be the same length as Dante's, although it was much shorter initially. We arrived at the current length after they decided what he'd be doing in the cutscene.



It was always planned to have Vergil contrast with Dante via his blue color scheme. Nelo Angelo (Vergil in "DMC (1)") was also blue, right? Whereas Dante wields a longsword, Vergil prefers the quieter, deadlier stylings of a Japanese katana.

Nara: Vergil is a character whose design began with motion. We wanted to make him a character whose every move is captivating and scene-stealing. His actions aren't as physically broad as Dante's, but they've got a certain sharpness and sense of contrast to them. Dante and Vergil both started with the same model data, but despite their being twins, we wanted their differences - rather than their similarities - to leave a big impression.

Ikeno: So do they share any attacks?

Nara: No, they don't. They resemble each other ever so slightly when it comes to hand-to-hand combat, but Vergil favors footwork more, so we only reused a small portion of Dante's attack assets. Their abilities are also very different. I got kind of obsessive with Vergil because I really like him as a character.

Ikawa: Vergil's model was a challenge. Three days before we were set to present "DMC 3" at E3, he wasn't even close to being finished. "DMC 3" was my first time being the lead modeler on a project, and I gave the responsibility for Vergil to someone else. Then, with the E3 deadline three days away, I went to check on what they'd done and saw that there was basically nothing. (laughs) So I took over and pulled three all-nighters, because all they'd done was a portion of the coat. (laughs) Vergil's clothes were also difficult. Unlike Dante's coat, Vergil's splits into three prongs, each of which needed joints for motion. Nara had a hard time with that too. (laughs)

Nara: Both of their coats' movements gave me trouble. Vergil also has Yamato's scabbard attached to his model, so you've got all these things hanging off of him, flopping around. (laughs)

Ikeno: At least his hair didn't flop too much.

Nara: Right. (laughs) I kept saying, "Can't he just take his coat off every time he fights?" That would have made my life so much easier...

Ikeno: (laughs) But if we'd followed that line of thinking, "DMC 3" wouldn't have come out as good as it did. It was successful precisely because we did overcome all those challenges. I also personally think that those coats are integral to the "DMC" feel.

What about Vergil's hidden costume?

Ikawa: Vergil's hidden costume is just Dante's hidden costume from "DMC (1)". But the problems with the data mentioned earlier meant that we had to do everything but the textures from scratch.

Nara: Vergil became a playable character for the first time in the "Special Edition" of "DMC 3", but we didn't start working on that until after the base "DMC 3" was done with. We never planned to make him playable throughout the development of "DMC 3", but we found ourselves with a lot of extra time after finishing. Even though we were preparing for "DMC 4" at the time, I really wanted to see a playable Vergil, so I sort of took it upon myself to make that happen. (laughs) Ikawa was working on another team at the time, but we were in communication about it...

Ikawa: I remember regretting getting involved. (laughs)

Nara: I knew you were on that other team, so I enlisted you secretly. (laughs)

Ikawa: I was doing "MH Freedom", which had some really tight deadlines, and then here comes your request for help on the "Special Edition". (laughs)

Nara: I thought it'd be cool for Vergil's hidden costume to be Nelo Angelo, so I asked Ikawa if he could make that for me. (laughs) The "Special Edition" team was in no big rush, so I'm sure the mood was very different from that of Ikawa's other team at the time.

Ikawa: I'll say. (laughs) I really wanted to make Nelo Angelo, though, so I managed to create a mockup model, leaving the rest to you.

How about Lady?

Ikeno: The inspiration for Lady's image is the black-haired Julia Volkova of the Russian girl group t.A.T.u. (laughs) This is a woman who sets off to kill demons all by herself, so we equipped her with weaponry that can get the job done. She had to look like a capable fighter, but... Japanese players just love school uniforms. (laughs) At the time, the members of t.A.T.u. were known for their uniform-style fashion, so we designed Lady's outfit to look like a uniform too. The thing around her waist looks like a



skirt at first glance, but it's actually made up of customized weaponry pouches. The hard pouches are wrapped around her waist and filled with gun magazines, but then they're decorated with a plaid pattern reminiscent of school uniforms. It's hard to say whether she custom-ordered them or made them herself. (laughs) Then there's her white button-up shirt, which feels very fresh and clean. I came up with a number of other battle-oriented designs, but in the end, the uniform look was very important. Itsuno had a big say in it, too. I may have chosen a look more suitable to fighting if it had been up to me. (laughs)

Were there any restrictions with regard to Lady's motions? As in, keeping her motions from mimicking t.A.T.u. too closely? (laughs)

Nara: That was just a concern on the design side of things. (laughs) Because she's not playable, she's not a character whose appeal is meant to come from her motions, so we didn't stress about that too much. But I do remember making a ton of motions related to her shooting her guns, if only because she has so many of them.

Ikeno: When it came to cutscenes, though, I requested that her motions be reflective of how experienced a fighter she is. How she's a lone, human woman deciding to fight against demons, with the skill and preparation to back that up. She's a fighting pro. When changing magazines, for example, she doesn't wait for one motion to end before starting the next; she's already reloading the next clip while still firing. The goal was to make her seem incredibly efficient.

What about Lady's father, Arkham?

Ikeno: I tried to give him a fairly simple design befitting a clergyman, but with extra attention paid to the face. He got the facial scars when he sacrificed his wife to perform a ritual that ended up failing. Giving him a shaved head was, again, done to draw attention to his face. Arkham's identity is basically "a guy who has given in to demonic power". Considering that he cares so little about his hair and fashion in general, I bet his closet is just full of that same black outfit. (laughs) When he goes shopping for clothes, he just buys the whole rack.

Nara: Arkham's motions were also just used for cutscenes. There's not much to note about him, except that we were sure to make him move in ways that fit with his whole secret agenda. Working on his second form, after his transformation, was a real struggle. ...I didn't understand what was going on at all. (laughs)

Ikawa: When I saw the design templates, I thought, "THIS is what you're giving to the modelers?" (laughs) We had no clue how to deal with that.



Ikeno: I don't think the players had a clue, either. (laughs)

Nara: It was especially difficult because it didn't really have a fixed form.

Ikawa: The prompt given to the modelers was basically, "Sparda's power is running wild, so Arkham can't maintain his form."

Ikeno: Right. He's really grotesque at that point.

Was there supposed to be an implication that this was Argosax manifesting in Arkham, long before playing a bigger role in "DMC 2"?

Ikeno: Nah. It was more just the convention that villains often try to take on too much power, so their plan backfires when that power runs wild within them, turning them into some hideous monster. Just a way of showing that they can't control the power.

Nara: Like Tetsuo in "Akira".

Ikeno: Exactly.

Ikawa: We also wanted Arkham to command 100 of those lesser Legion demons, right? (laughs) In the end, though, it was more like 20.

Nara: I wonder. Yeah, probably around 20 on-screen at any given time. We made them especially resource-light in order to fit in as many as possible, because without a significant number of them, Dante and Vergil could wipe out the whole bunch pretty quickly during the part when they fight together. That's why we were ordered to produce a lot of them. Trying to achieve those numbers was rough, but we still managed to make the Legions open and close their mouths. (laughs)

Ikawa: The Legions actually didn't have any proper motions. That was all done automatically, on the programming side. Focusing on the numbers meant leaving little leeway for anything else.

Can we talk about Jester?

Ikeno: He's basically a split personality that formed from the power that Arkham obtained during his wife-sacrificing ritual, incomplete though it was. Lady, Arkham, and Jester's heterochromia was an angle that Itsuno really pushed for. I opposed the idea on the basis that it was too "manga"-ish, but in the end I consented because it did make the characters distinguishable.

Nara: Jester's motif is clearly a clown. In cutscenes, he's always popping up in different locations, so for a while his identity is unclear. (laughs) I think his playful attitude in those cutscenes worked well, and I'm glad we made him able to show a variety of expressions. Jester is the only character with comic book reactions, like how his eyes pop out of his head when he's surprised. Even his nose was given a bunch of joints so that it could move around.

How about when Arkham transforms into Sparda?

Nara: Sparda, too, was difficult. (laughs)

Ikawa: For sure. (laughs) At first we thought he'd only be used in cutscenes, so they gave us the assets from "DMC (1)" to work with. The crudeness of that original model wouldn't be so apparent if seen from a distance, so I planned to just use it as-is, but at some point, I just couldn't stand looking at it. Even though "DMC (1)" and "DMC 3" were both on the PS2,

that model data was just too outdated. (laughs) So in the end, I redid the whole thing. I used the model from "DMC (1)" as a template and redesigned it on my own. (laughs) That's why I'm pretty sure Ikeno did not even see Sparda.

Ikeno: Right. (laughs)

Nara: I couldn't even tell what was going on with the original model data. (laughs) Like, did they even have a design for him? There weren't even any textures.

Ikawa: He was only ever a silhouette in "DMC (1)", meant to be seen from afar.

Nara: The data just probably wasn't there. When I was making Trish for "DMC 2", it occurred to me to reuse Dante's assets from "DMC (1)". But when I went to get the backup data from "DMC (1)", I fell into the trap set by the software guys. (laughs) I'm sure Hiraki and the others will have already told you about this (see page 200), but the characters' speed in the backup data was completely different from how it was in the retail release. The final motions had also been programmed in separately by the software guys, so in order to replicate them, I had to place a television running the original game next to my work monitor and eyeball it. (laughs) So the Dante in "DMC 3" was actually made using Trish's data from "DMC 2". (laughs) We had all sorts of problems with that damn backup data from "DMC (1)"...

✦ LOOKING BACK ON PAST WORK

Are there any aspects of your work on "DMC 2" and/or "DMC 3" that you're particularly fond of? If so, why?

Nara: For me, it would have to be Trish in "DMC 2", who I just mentioned. Included within her is a big "I'm sorry" to everyone on the "DMC (1)" team, because I kind of just put the "DMC (1)" Dante aside and decided to pour all my energy into Trish. (laughs) The software guys for "DMC 2" really helped me out when it came to recreating her. Also, the original release of "DMC 2" didn't have flame effects for her "Kick 13" and "Magma Drive" fighting moves, but the second release did have those effects, which I was really happy about. (laughs) Kudos to the software guys for that as well. I really dedicated myself to Trish when it came to "DMC 2". You'll have to forgive me for that. (laughs) Simply put, "DMC 3" was meant to be an act of redemption for "DMC 2", so I gave it all I had. I packed as many features into the "DMC 3" Dante as I could, feeling sorry all the while for whoever would have the privilege of working on him next. I also included some homages to the "Street Fighter" series when it came to the



hand-to-hand combat sections. I can safely say that I accomplished everything I wanted to with "DMC 3" and that I'm especially proud of how Dante turned out. Then it came time to make Vergil, and I was sure to take my time thinking about how to do right by him. He shares the same model as Dante, but they're very different characters. I had a lot of fun showing that in the course of making him a playable character in the "Special Edition".

Ikawa: I had nothing but trouble making sure everything was finished. I could never pass Ikeno's checks. (laughs) At the same time, though, all of the playable characters I worked on got great feedback. It's kind of funny looking back now, but there were a lot of incidents like the one with Vergil. (laughs) The same thing happened with

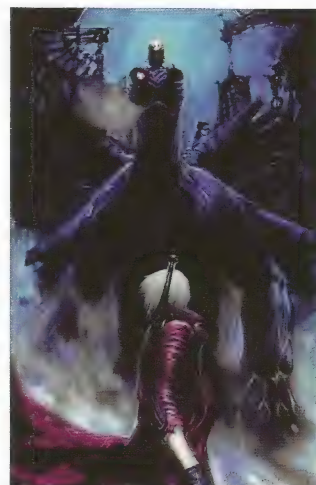
Lady, actually. She wasn't done at all, so I took over and finished her. (laughs) I also ran into trouble with the Hell Series enemies just one week before E3. (laughs) During testing, I noticed that there was no way to differentiate their quick movements from their attacks. Also, they were all similar colors at first, which was a problem for an action game, where visual cues are so important. For instance, red enemies might use melee attacks while blue ones have projectiles. I can't imagine why Nara asked me to fix the designs. (laughs) Redoing those designs and telling the modelers to redo their work just a week before E3 is a memory that will stick with me. The development of "DMC 3" was full of such incidents.

Nara: I redid the Hell Series so many times. They were probably the first and last things I worked on...

Ikawa: Enemy characters are made for fighting through and through, so it's important that they are easily understood visually and that they leave an impression. They probably take more time and effort than bosses, even.

Nara: You did Beowulf, right Ikeno?

Ikeno: I really like Beowulf's design. His original concept and name were different, though, and I regret that he ended up with a completely unrelated name.



Nara: Are there any backgrounds you like?

Ikeno: In "DMC 3", I like the whole tower and the ritual that opens the gate to the demon world.

Nara: Temen-ni-gru, right?

Ikeno: Good memory! (laughs) I couldn't remember the name off the top of my head. Are you peeking at the old artwork? (laughs)

Nara: I swear I'm not. (laughs)

Ikeno: Temen-ni-gru had appropriately grandiose backgrounds and effects, and it fit into the narrative really effectively. We thought long and hard about how to design it... about what sort of tower Temen-ni-gru should actually be. To be honest, we reused a lot of assets when making it, but we managed to avoid pissing off the players by not making that too obvious. (laughs) I knew the fantasy feel would be lessened if we explicitly drew in battery-like parts powering the tower, so instead we made it mysterious-looking, like nothing from any known civilization. In that spirit, we had the idea of portraying the tower's moving parts like the floating rocks in the movie "Castle in the Sky". So I drew the moving parts that way, with gears and such. The seven bells that ring out during the final cutscene are part of the seven deadly sins motif. The final design for the bells has one to seven angels nailed to each one, but I originally wanted to change each of them to visually represent the sins. That proved impossible (laughs), so instead we have these tortured angels, with their pained cries being the sound of the bells' ringing. The angels are an offering, and ringing those bells is what opens the gate to the demon world. To this day, I'm still fond of that whole design. (laughs)

I'll try to pay closer attention to the backgrounds next time I play, then. (laughs) Thank you for your time.

Interview

MISSION.4 ● THE SCENARIO WRITER WHO WEAVES THE STORY

BINGO MORIHASHI HAS WORKED AS A NOVELIST, SCENARIO WRITER, AND MANGA ARTIST. HERE, HE SHARES WITH US A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE CREATION OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN "DEVIL MAY CRY 2", "3", AND "4".

✦ FROM PLANNER TO SCENARIO WRITER

Bingo-san, how did you come to be involved with the "Devil May Cry" series [hereinafter referred to as "DMC"]?

Bingo: I was doing my training after being hired at Capcom, wondering what team they'd put me on, and that first team just happened to be the "DMC 2" one. Development had actually been going for a while, though. The story, characters, and designs were all pretty much in place. Only the gameplay was left, and they used all sorts of people to finish it up. I was one of those people, so I got assigned various odd jobs. (laughs) I reviewed finished assets, oversaw the translation, and those sorts of things.

You were a planner, right? Was writing that column on the official site part of your job as a planner too?

Bingo: Yes. That's the kind of thing they make newbies do a lot... the work no one else wants to do. (laughs) But my background was in writing anyway, so it makes sense that they made me write the instruction manual, for instance.

You'd already written things before joining Capcom, right?

Bingo: The debut of my first book was scheduled about a year in advance of my joining Capcom. I received a literary prize, and my book came out immediately before I was hired. I mentioned it in my interview, even, saying that I wanted to do both jobs at once. They said, "You're free to try, but that doesn't seem possible. You won't have the time." (laughs) Even so, I wrote whenever I could in secret. (laughs)

Your most famous work, "Tokyo Shitamou", came out before joining Capcom, right?

Bingo: The first volume, "Hitsuji no Uta", did, yes. The second, "Tsuki ni Hoeru", was written around the time I started coughing up blood during "DMC 2". I was only sleeping two hours per night. Honestly, "DMC 2" was really stressful and I needed a way to vent. (laughs) Not being able to work on anything else was so upsetting. I was living close to the company, so I'd get home around dawn, bathe, change clothes, and then head right back. I was practically sleeping at work so I wouldn't be late. (laughs) I'd even take naps during lunch breaks. I've been involved in "DMC 2" through "4", but the year or so that I spent on "DMC 2" was by far the hardest. (laughs) Seriously...

So design and characters took precedence, even with the gameplay unfinished?

Bingo: That's right. The stages were mostly there, but not the missions. That was my starting point. It was like we had all the trappings done, but not the filling, which made things very hard. It was around that time that Itsuno-san [Hideaki Itsuno; see page 220] became the director and started planning a complete overhaul. Itsuno-san actually wanted to make it an original, non-"DMC" title, but his involvement with "DMC 2" led to "DMC 3" and "4", so he never got to do what he wanted. (laughs)

The "DMC 2" team members mostly came from fighting game backgrounds, right?

Bingo: The core staff members were people with arcade expertise. Industry-wise, plans for "DMC 2" began at a time when arcade games were on the decline. That was shortly before

"DMC [1]" was completed, so most of the "DMC [1]" team members were absent from "DMC 2".

The story of "DMC 2" was already largely in place, but did you get to tinker with it at all?

Bingo: All I got to do were subtitles. They were already at the point of translating the script, so no more changes could be made. The stages and bosses were also already done, so making any alterations at that point would have been difficult. I believe the story of "DMC 2" was outsourced to a non-company writer, so I'm not sure how it ended up like it did. Once we got that scenario, I was told that I could fine-tune it as long as the changes weren't big ones. So I augmented some dialogue here and there. I was careful not to go overboard, given that it was still my first year at the company. (laughs) Still, I wasn't sure quite how far I was allowed to go.

Did your involvement in "DMC 2" lead directly to "DMC 3"?

Bingo: Itsuno-san basically said, "Let's do 'DMC 3'!" and everyone gradually started getting to work on it. There was no doubt that he wanted Narasan [Hiroyuki Nara; see page 204] and those other guys as his starting lineup. Employing people outside the company and dealing with that sort of correspondence would simply have taken too much time, so I was given my job on "DMC 3" mostly because they were trying to keep the staff limited to company employees. The team also wished they could have been more involved in the scenario for "DMC 2", which led to the "Let's do it right this time" attitude with "DMC 3".

You also wrote a website column for "DMC 3", so does that mean you were still officially a planner?

Bingo: In name only. (laughs) My title the whole time was indeed "planner", but Itsuno-san once remarked, "Bingo's value to the team is completely different depending on whether he's doing planning work or scenario work." (laughs) To be sure, I was never a fan of working as a planner. (laughs) In "DMC 3", they initially had me doing enemy movements and picking stages, but at one point I said, "I'm not that great at this planning work, and I find myself pulling overtime in order to polish the script." "Great. Then just take care of the script" was the answer I got, and that's how I wound up doing scenario work and nothing but. That was in the latter half of development, though. When it came time for "DMC 4", I didn't do any planning work at all.

Can you talk about your involvement with "DMC 4" a bit?

Bingo: "DMC 3" sold pretty well, and the gameplay and scenario were generally well-liked by the players, so "DMC 4" was green-lighted without much discussion, as was my own involvement with it. With "DMC 4", I was only assigned scenario work. That alone didn't provide much to do, though, so I was also put in charge of some other projects. There were actually a number of people at Capcom who specialized in writing, and they had formed their own "Scenario Division", kind of like the "Design Divisions" of yore. They would take contracts for various scenarios and scripts, operating like a company within the company. They asked me to join, and we met, but then I realized that we were all way too individualistic. (laughs) A lot of people who end up becoming writers just aren't good at cooperating with others. (laughs) Work orders came by word-of-mouth, too, because

there was nothing official about the setup. Everyone just received their own work and did their own work, and there was no sense that the group functioned as a team. (laughs) I didn't have any connections to start with, and my only experience was with the "DMC" teams, so I never got any work orders. (laughs) That's why I told Itsuno-san that the whole "writer team" thing wasn't really working out and that I'd probably be quitting Capcom. (laughs) He told me that they could always outsource work to me, so once the "DMC 4" scenario was finished, I quit. I also had my own books to work on, so I think it was the right decision. However, they were lacking manpower for the rest of "DMC 4", so I kept helping out for about another year. I worked on the controller rumble feature for when enemies appear during cutscenes, because incidentally, the tools for doing that were the same ones used to implement subtitles. So they asked me to do both. (laughs)

So you were the only one officially in charge of the scenario for "DMC 4"?

Bingo: Right. I was alone on "DMC 4", whereas with "DMC 3", everyone discussed it together. There was this real desire to do it right, so I got together with the people at Links [who made the cutscenes] and film director Shimomura [Yuji Shimomura; a famous action movie director] to craft the scenario. It took about a year.

✦ SECRETS BEHIND THE SERIES' CHARACTERS

What sort of impressions have the "DMC" series' characters left on you? Let's start with Dante.

Bingo: I worked on three whole games in the series and I still can't get a read on Dante. He wasn't a character that I originally created, so I'd always doubt myself when writing his dialogue, wondering if it really fit him. (laughs) The character really takes after Kamiya-san [Hideaki Kamiya; known for the "DMC" series]. There's this strange, incredibly strong aura to him. You can try your best to get close to him, but he'll never really open up. (laughs) That's the kind of character Dante is. Players have mentioned that the Dante in "DMC 3" seems different, but that's because he's less "Kamiya's Dante" and more a product of the entire team's will. They used the "DMC [1]" Dante as inspiration, but there was really no way to surpass what Kamiya-san had created. The way Dante goes up against the world alone makes him an awesome character in my eyes.

How about Trish?

Bingo: I feel the same way about her as I do the Dante from "DMC [1]". Her inclusion in "DMC 4" was mostly fanservice. She would have had more of a place if the whole story was Dante's story, but it's not. It's Nero's.

What about Lucia, the heroine of "DMC 2"?

Bingo: "Not bad, I guess" is about how I would sum her up. (laughs) I expected her to get friendlier, but she always remained cold and distant. Maybe because I never wrote any of her lines? I feel the same way about Matier.

Can you talk about Arius?

Bingo: I remember a lot of the "DMC 2" team members being quite pleased with Arius. (laughs) There's just something cool about him. People thought it was neat to have a CEO as the villain. He also serves to keep "DMC 2" grounded as more of a contemporary drama.

BINGO MORIHASHI

Worked as a planner on "DEVIL MAY CRY 2" and as a scenario writer on "DEVIL MAY CRY 3" and "4". He was also involved in the anime and novel adaptations of "DMC". He debuted as a novelist before joining Capcom and has a number of popular titles to his name, including "SHINONOME YUUKO".

"DMC (1)" was supposed to be that, but it ended up having more of a "fantasy world" feel, yeah? You fight in Western-style houses and the only other human-ish character is Trish. In "DMC 2", Lucia and Matier are also part of that fantasy element. Arius, on the other hand, is a symbol of high contemporary culture, and he really inspired me when it came to the stories that would come after. I was in charge of the scenario for the "DMC" anime, and you have some very grounded characters in that, like your average bar girl and gangsters. Those types don't appear in the games at all, but Arius was all the hint I needed that going in that direction might be a good idea. "DMC 2" was important for the role it played in establishing the "DMC" series in a contemporary setting.

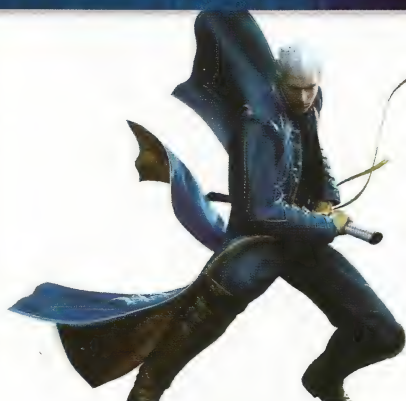


How about Vergil?

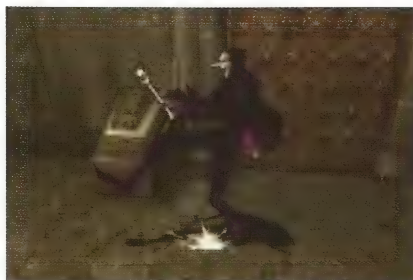
Bingo: He was a character with no pre-existing design, so I worked on him from scratch and consequently gave him a lot of consideration. Team members would often say, "That Bingo sure does love Vergil." I decided to give him a katana because we already had Yamato to work with; the idea of selecting a Japanese katana as his weapon came about because of the pre-existing Yamato. I had already proposed the idea of a character who didn't use guns, but my reasoning at the time was pretty weak at best, citing observations like, "People like that sort of thing, right?" I'm glad I got a chance to create Vergil's character in a sense, but he wouldn't have made a good protagonist. Already having Dante was really a prerequisite for creating Vergil, so much so that if you told me to write a scenario starring Vergil, I'd flat-out refuse... because he's not exciting. (laughs) In "DMC 3", I wanted to exemplify that contrast between the dumb little brother and the cool older brother [Vergil is older by several hours].

What about Arkham and Jester?

Bingo: I said that Vergil had no pre-existing design, but his name actually was dropped in "DMC (1)", which at least provided a jumping-off point for designing him. Arkham, Lady, and Jester, on the other hand were completely original characters, which made them difficult. (laughs) Arkham and Jester are the same person, but that wasn't always the case. Jester was originally going



to be Arkham's subordinate, but that option wound up being too complicated gameplay-wise. Jester's lines were essential to the story, though, so after much deliberation, someone proposed making the two characters into one, and Arkham was modified into a character capable of putting on such a performance. Without that change, Arkham would have been a fairly boring bad guy. By making him Jester, we got to enjoy Lady's line, "Father, why would you do such a thing?" even more. (laughs) Because it's really a gruesome performance that he puts on. (laughs) I really think the addition of Jester makes Arkham into a more full-bodied character. By adding that lecherous nuance to his ordinarily serious face, you get a fascinating character. You can't help but chuckle upon learning his secret, given how serious he is otherwise. Arkham's attempt to gain demonic powers failed, so he really isn't all that powerful; transforming is pretty much all he can do. I wanted to show Jester turning into Arkham in real-time in the second half of the game, but technical limitations made that impossible. With the technology available today, I think that one spoiler-filled cutscene near the end of the game would be made very differently. Jester was also given heterochromia, just like Arkham.



Can you talk about Arkham's daughter, Lady?

Bingo: I really like her. We originally planned to have her be older than Dante; that's how I would have liked it. (laughs) But Itsuno-san said, "No way." (laughs) He wanted a character that would go over well with the Japanese audience. My original proposal was a cigarette-smoking demon hunter who could act like a mentor to Dante, but Itsuno-san's response was, "No way. The only way she'll be popular with the Japanese audience is if she looks like a high-schooler." I had no choice, so I agreed to make the change. Trish already felt older than Dante, and the Dante in "DMC 3" is much younger, so it was decided that Lady should be slightly younger than Dante. Her appearance was up in the air for much of development, so I ended up writing her without a clear visual in mind. All we knew from the start was that she'd have

black hair. Trish was blonde and Lucia was a redhead, so this almost Scandinavian-looking European should definitely have black hair; that's what the team decided on. Because what the Japanese audience definitely didn't want was more blondes or swarthy girls. The whole team agreed that "DMC 3" was a game made for the Japanese. We were happy to worry about the rest of the world later, because first and foremost, we - the creators - would have been in a bad place if the game wasn't a hit in Japan. Sure, we could have moved millions of units overseas and only tens of thousands in Japan, but focusing on the numbers like that and aiming for foreign sales would have been abandoning the Japanese fans who had supported us this whole time. That was the thought process, so we buckled down and concentrated on making a game that would do well in Japan. Vergil's katana and sword-draw techniques were also nods to the Japanese fans; we figured that most foreigners probably wouldn't understand that sleek, simple aesthetic. Lady's black hair, too. It wasn't easy, but we appealed to the audience we were aiming for.



Is it typical not to have visuals to work with while writing a scenario?

Bingo: It's often the case that characters are only drawn after they've been written into the scenario. Sometimes one might put in an order for the designers to create a generic "heroine", but with "DMC 3" and "DMC 4", the scenario came first because writing the script is the fastest part of the process. The descriptions in the script lead to visual designs, and then we use one to improve the other. If we take Lady as an example, she was designed as a black-haired human who naturally has to use guns if she wants to fight against demons. We decided that she shouldn't be flinging herself at the enemy, sword in hand, which resulted in the weapon-laden Lady who appears in the final version.

How about Nero, the protagonist of "DMC 4"?

Bingo: Oh, poor, poor Nero. (laughs) Dante has always just seemed too strong as a character, so I made Nero with the idea that the series could still continue even if we were to lose Dante. Figuring out the scenario and Dante's lines in "DMC 3" was an easy task. But Nero took months, even though the basics of the character were decided early on. I think he came out all right in the end, but he actually

started out as a Sherlock Holmes-type character, sipping tea as he fought off demons. (laughs) But they decided that wasn't such a



good idea. (laughs) That was the angle I was gunning for, though. He wound up being your typical wild and crazy kid, but in that sense he resembles Dante quite a bit, so I thought we needed ways to distinguish between the two. I gave him one part Dante's wildness and one part Vergil's sophistication, which gave him a refined, noble nuance. But that wasn't well-received either. So I was told to simply write the scenario as if the character was Dante, and once the team was satisfied with the story's direction, we began to flesh out Nero; his childishness, his unexpected serious moments. I believe this anecdote has been mentioned in some interview somewhere, but the team debated over whether Nero would be the type to cover up his privates in a public bath or let it all hang out. The base for Nero's design is undoubtedly Dante, and if you aged him ten years, Nero would basically resemble Dante physically. After a lot of discussion, though, I was convinced that Nero would definitely cover up his junk in a public bath, whereas Dante wouldn't have ever cared about that from a young age, and it wouldn't make a difference to him as an adult in "DMC 4", either. But Nero begins as a more reserved young man, so the big questions were, "Is that enough of a difference?" and "Are we implying that he'll grow up to be just like Dante?" Coming off of "DMC 3", I think that sort of characterization was just right. Nero took more time and gave me more trouble than anything else in "DMC 3" and "DMC 4". I put a lot of consideration into him.

What sparked the change from "nobleman Nero" to the Nero we've come to know?

Bingo: Noble Nero takes a turn for the subdued during a cutscene. On the design side, well, our goal was to make players laugh, and sophisticated characters are bound to elicit a chuckle. I actually really liked the refined version of Nero that Yoshikawa-san [Tatsuya Yoshikawa; see page 212] showed me. I pushed for that, but the team was generally against it, so that aspect faded away. One thing about Nero's design that was decided from the start was his use of a revolver. That was the only one of my initial decisions that stuck. I wanted him to use a revolver and a katana, but the katana was nixed. I considered the revolver to be absolutely essential, though, in order to distinguish Nero from Dante. For the main weapon, motion artist Hiraki-san [Yuichiro Hiraki; see page 198] said he wanted a motorcycle-like sword. What does that even mean, though? He explained that the sword's handle would rumble and sputter like an engine, and everyone loved the idea. Using that sword was important for Nero's characterization, because it gave him this "biker gang" element. That plus his wildness signaled the shift to the current Nero.



Were you consciously thinking about how your characters would be received in Japan and overseas?

Bingo: Not especially. While we were making "DMC 3", "God of War" was a big hit overseas. I played it and enjoyed it, but I didn't understand why the protagonist had to be that way. (laughs) With "DMC 3", our stance was that our characters should be geared toward a domestic audience, but then it turned out that Vergil wasn't poorly-received at all overseas. He was actually really popular, and people thought he was cool. So that gave us confidence about our character creation process and decisions. That's why, even with "DMC 4", we weren't especially worried about intentionally appealing to the overseas markets. By the way, the color scheme of Nero's manteau is meant to show how he's sort of the successor to both Dante and Vergil.



Was the protagonist role always going to be split evenly between Nero and Dante?

Bingo: At first, the intent was more of a 70/30 split, with Nero taking the larger role. Giving Dante nothing was unthinkable from a sales perspective, so we were bouncing around between 70/30 and 60/40. In the end, though, they each received an equal slice. We somehow gave Dante more missions and weapons than we expected to. (laughs)

Can you speak about Kyrie?

Bingo: She was created almost as a goddess, so her lack of flaws means that she's not very memorable. (laughs) She's the type to comfort and forgive someone even if they do bad things. That's about the extent of her relationship with Nero. "DMC 4" begins with him liking her, so it only made sense to make her utterly likable. As a cookie-cutter, admirable big sister-type, she wasn't hard to write into the scenario. She's basically this perfect Virgin Mary, so her design wasn't difficult either. She had to be reasonably tall, sensual, and with huge breasts. That was all a matter of course. Her backstory, though, makes you feel sorry for her.

How about Kyrie's brother, Credo?

Bingo: He's a straightforward character. Nero is to Credo as Dante is to Vergil, essentially. Kyrie was designed first, and as her brother, Credo simply had to be a real straight-edge type of guy. We actually planned to make him the final boss at one point. Final bosses are rarely young men, so that would have been exciting. But that would have been really hard on poor Kyrie, and she would come to resent Nero, so we realized that Credo shouldn't be an out-and-out villain. Besides ruining Nero and Kyrie's relationship, making him a villain would have been a rehash of the "family betrayal" plot from "DMC 3". So rather, he starts off doing questionable things but later has a change of heart. Credo was easy to craft, in that sense.

What about Agnus?

Bingo: Credo, Agnus, and Gloria were written together as a set. The combat officers for the bad guys, you might say. You've got the straightlaced knight, the mad scientist, and the sexy lady. I never really wavered on what Agnus should be like. He's a straightforward, common



archetype. When recording his lines, his voice actor suggested inserting the stammer, which I thought added to his characterization. Having the musical-like scene came from another impromptu suggestion during a recording session. The staff in the studio at the time thought it was a great idea, so we went with it. That helped Agnus come into his own as a character. I originally thought to have him talk almost drunkenly, which seems pretty standard for mad scientist characters. But the voice actor's suggestions brought the character to an entirely different level of likability. Agnus and Nero are always at odds with each other, and Nero refuses to react to Agnus' gags and pratfalls (whereas Dante would). I thought that was another good way to distinguish Nero from Dante. If Agnus starts joking around, Nero will calmly shoot him with his revolver. (laughs) He won't go along with the joke. Dante, however, would play along for a while, for laughs.



How about Gloria?

Bingo: Gloria is sexy, and that's pretty much it. She really wasn't necessary, but I begged for her inclusion, and they humored me. (laughs) She was originally just going to be a straight-up villain, but that created a number of problems, so she was simply modified to be Trish in disguise. Trish and Lady were initially just going to be used in Dante's opening scene and nothing else.



Can you talk about Sanctus?

Bingo: The high priest is easily recognizable as a cult leader. Funnily enough, he was originally named "Benedict", but then, coincidentally, Pope Benedict was elected in real life. (laughs) I remember deciding, "Well, we can't do that!" I didn't struggle with his design too much. I thought that perhaps he could use demonic power to become young again, but they didn't want another character model to worry about, so that didn't happen. His backstory involves him once having been a knight himself, among other things, but we didn't make much use of those elements. I would have liked to do more with him; to delve more into his character.



✠ THE THEME OF "LOVE" THROUGHOUT THE SERIES

Considering your work on the "DMC" series thus far, who would you say is your favorite character?

Bingo: Definitely Nero. He's just so charming. He's like the child of a celebrity, making TV appearances and profiting off of his father's fame. (laughs) Of course, I feel a little bad for him, given that he has to exist alongside the ever-popular Dante and Vergil. (laughs) Even though we're the ones who made that happen. (laughs)

Can you recall any amusing anecdotes or events that left an impression on you during your time writing "DMC 3" and "DMC 4"?

Bingo: I touched on this earlier, but we spent about a year working out the scenario for "DMC 3". I was staying in Capcom's housing on Kashiko Island in Mie Prefecture, but I didn't get much sleep because I was hammering out that scenario from dawn to dusk. I'll always remember that. I'd never experienced anything like that before and I haven't since, although my time on "DMC 4" came close. The meetings in the boarding house were purely to figure out the story of "DMC 3". I was just a rank-and-file staff member, but the rest of the employees all had other work to worry about at the company, so they were very limited in terms of the times and places they could meet. As such, we got together over a very short amount of time to figure out missions 1-20 in the story. That was all accomplished in just two nights, because there was no other way to get all these adults gathered in one room, working on a single task. Of course, if we'd had more than enough time, you can bet we would have been tossing around all sorts of dumb ideas. On the flip side, a two-hour conference would have forced everyone to be extra serious, maybe too much so. Five hours turned out to be the perfect amount of time, as the ideas that emerged from that were unexpectedly good. The over-the-top scenes that define "DMC 3" are the product of those boarding house meetings. I mean, nobody in a formal office meeting would ever suggest, "What if he clubs them with his motorcycle?" We'd have deemed that too ridiculous in a formal setting, but when pulling an all-nighter with your exhausted colleagues? "Yeah, that could work." "DMC 3" was really fun in that sense. "DMC 4" turned out to be much tougher, perhaps because we overdid it with "DMC 3".



In an old column, you once wrote that "love" is the theme of "DMC", with "DMC 3" specifically using "family" to show that. You haven't made such specific designations for "DMC 2" and "DMC 4", but if you had to, what would they be?

Bingo: "Love" is definitely the theme that pervades the whole series. I daresay that the theme of "DMC (1)" is "humanity" (or human love), which is the broadest kind there is.

"DMC 3" focuses on familial love. You've got Arkham and Lady as well as Dante and Vergil, and they're all trying to kill each other. Originally, Itsuno-san really didn't like the scene where Lady kills Arkham. He said that a child should never kill a parent, but I was fervent about keeping that in. To balance that out, though, I also included the line where Lady says that killing Arkham is her responsibility, which helps explain the situation to people who don't like the scene. That same line from her is also all Dante needs to hear before deciding to stop Vergil himself. It all ties together nicely.



As for "DMC 4"... It's a much smaller story about a boy trying to protect the girl he loves. Ramo Nakajima-san [a Japanese author from Amagasaki City who died in 2004] wrote a tagline promoting Amagasaki City's 70th anniversary that went like, "I love you, so I love the city that you love." I love that line. When I told the team that the nature of Nero and Kyrie's love was that line, they finally got it. Nero protects the city because he loves Kyrie so much. I really wanted to create a Hollywood blockbuster kind of experience with "DMC 4", and somehow, so did the rest of the team. I didn't think our first title on the PS3 should be like "DMC 3", which catered to the hardcore fanbase and wasn't as well-received by casual players. We wanted to make "DMC 4" neat, clean, and straightforward; your basic "damsel in distress" story. The visuals were very impressive, of course, enough so to entice people who saw the TV commercial for "DMC 4" into buying the game. We wanted it to not just look "interesting", but "amazing". "DMC 2", of course, is about Dante's love for his father. He follows in his father's footsteps by protecting something that his father once protected.

Would it be fair to say that the Dante in "DMC 4" is a compilation of all the past Dantes?

Bingo: Back during "DMC 3", people were already saying, "Isn't this getting too complicated?" I think we took it to the limit. There was talk of implementing a complete style overhaul in "DMC 3", but that proved to be impossible with the technology available. "DMC 4" ended up receiving that style change, but I'm not sure if it would have worked with Dante as the protagonist. It might have just been too complex for the characters who have been around for the entire series. Having those central characters play bit parts, though, was just absurd enough. Figuring out what to do with Dante has become a running theme, because he's just too strong. Given that he already beat the biggest bad guy there is in "DMC (1)", how do you keep the sequels from being disappointing and feeling downgraded? The series has its conventions that have to be followed, but if there's nothing backing them up, then you might as well not even write a proper scenario. A token case of amnesia? (laughs) Gotta have that. Someone dying? (laughs) That too. Nero himself was just a product of the "new protagonist" trope. "DMC 3" takes place in the past, so even a weak sense of continuity was good enough.

"DMC 3" has even been called "DMC 0" at times.

Bingo: There were talks of setting it in a parallel world at first, because Vergil being alive doesn't quite mesh with the events of "DMC (1)". But Itsuno-san said, "If it's interesting, then do it and don't worry. If it has to be a parallel world, then it's a parallel world." I agreed, so I went ahead and wrote it that way. I'd actually been discussing the matter with Kamiya-san since "DMC 2". As far as "DMC 3" was concerned, he said, "You don't even have to explicitly say it's a parallel world." I told him that doing that might mess up the continuity, but he didn't care, saying that those kinds of things happen all the time. (laughs) That assuaged my concerns, since it was Kamiya-san saying it after all. Writers in general, though, are always very wary of inconsistencies, and I didn't want to ruin the groundwork that had been laid in "DMC (1)". But Kamiya-san's reassurance was all I needed. (laughs) I could always blame him if things got screwed up. (laughs) My original fear was that he'd get angry and demand to know why I changed things around, especially because this was his series from the start, and everyone else had only joined in partway through.

So that's how "DMC 3" wound up as wild as it did?

Bingo: That's right, and Kamiya-san said it still wasn't enough. (laughs) Early in development, we were discussing how "DMC 3" would have a shirtless Dante, contrasting with the more refined Dante from "DMC (1)", and Kamiya-san said, "This Dante is quieter than I expected. And if you're going to change up his image, feel free to give him a weapon that's not a sword." (laughs) Kamiya-san is just the type who likes to throw out the old to make room for the new. (laughs) We explained to him that if he were to do that, the fans probably wouldn't mind, but they'd surely be pissed at us if we went ahead with that. He said, "That sounds about right." (laughs) He even said we could give Dante long hair. (laughs) So many outlandish suggestions. Also, "You've gotta give Dante a sleeveless shirt!" (laughs) or, "Give him two weapons to dual wield right from the start." He would just blurt out whatever he wanted. (laughs)

Finally, if you were to have the chance to write for future "DMC" games, what sort of themes would you go with?

Bingo: If I could, I would utilize Nero again. If someone else wants to write another story for Dante, then by all means, be my guest. Because Dante's always going to be pretty much the same no matter who is writing. But I feel more protective of Nero. He was the protagonist of "DMC 4", yes, but that wasn't always the case. In my hypothetical "DMC 5", he'd be the star from the outset.

Thank you for your time.

Interview

MISSION.5 ● THE ONES WHO CHALLENGED THE NEXT LEVEL

"DEVIL MAY CRY 4" WAS THE FIRST TITLE IN THE SERIES TO BE RELEASED ON THE PLAYSTATION 3 AND XBOX 360. WE WELCOME ILLUSTRATOR TATSUYA YOSHIKAWA TO REMINISCE ABOUT THE GAME WITH HIS COLLEAGUES FROM THAT TIME.

✦ AIMING FOR INNOVATION

How did each of you come to be involved with "Devil May Cry 4" [hereinafter referred to as "DMC 4"]?

Nara: Much like Hiraki, I joined right after "DMC 3" was finished.

Hiraki: You were in the middle of "DMC 3: Special Edition" [hereinafter referred to as "SE"] at the time, yeah?

Nara: Right. "DMC 4" and "SE" were going at the same time. Of course the producer, Kobayashi [Hiroyuki Kobayashi; known for "Sengoku Basara"], brought you onto the team too, Hiraki.

Hiraki: Oh, is that how it was? After "Sengoku Basara" was over?

Nara: Yeah. He wanted you to help with "DMC 4".

Hiraki: And right after joining, we made "Back Alley Dante" together, yeah.

Nara: That was a teaser we made early on, where Dante kicks over the camera. At the time, everything was still hush-hush, so all we could make was that short movie. For me, that was the start of "DMC 4". Nothing about the design was set in stone, so the point of that was just to say, "We're making 'DMC 4'."

Hiraki: Besides "Back Alley Dante", there was also "Snowy Mountain Dante", right?

Nara: Which came first? Anyway, the snowy mountain one had some unknown red-garbed guy standing there.

Ikawa: I joined "DMC 4" partway through development. Back while working on "SE", I was also working on "Monster Hunter Freedom" and "Monster Hunter 2" [hereinafter referred to as "MH"], so I was about a month late joining "DMC 4". Back before the models were even made, when the preparation for the manuals still had to be done, I decided to take all my accumulated vacation from my time on "MH". Nara said, "Get back here!" but I stuck to my guns and took a whole month off. Nara was so mad when I got back. "You were off too long." (laughs) Pretty much nobody ever takes a whole month off, but I felt I had to just get away and forget everything for a while. (laughs)

Nara: Less "mad", more "jealous". (laughs)

Ikawa: I was barely holding it together with the two "MH" games already, and then I was helping out with "SE" too. I hardly had time to go home. (laughs)

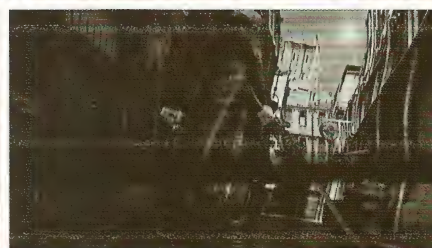
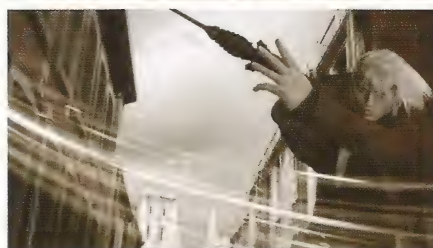
When I joined the "DMC 4" team, they were toying with different model options for Dante and figuring out MT Framework [a PS3 game engine]. "DMC 4" was the first of the series on PS3, so it was my first time working with MT Framework. The company had already used MT Framework for the Xbox 360 titles "Lost Planet" and "Dead Rising", but this was immediately after that. We still didn't know much about it, which necessitated a lot of experimentation.

Yoshikawa: Roughly speaking, development on "DMC 4" began when the former arcade division and console division were being merged. At the time, I was personally trying to figure out what to work on next. Someone from

SNOWY MOUNTAIN DANTE: "DMC 4" TEASER AD



BACK ALLEY DANTE: "DMC 4" TEASER MOVIE



JUN IKAWA

Supervised all models in "DMC 4", continuing on with his role from "DMC 3". He has also worked on several of Capcom's other big titles, including the "MONSTER HUNTER" series, "DRAGON'S DOGMA", and "RESIDENT EVIL 5".

HIROYUKI NARA

The lead motion manager for "DMC 4", who was responsible for animating Dante. He also served as the game's character creation supervisor. He has worked on three different "DMC" titles, and most recently, he helped direct "MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3".

YUICHIRO HIRAKI

A motion artist for "DMC 4" who primarily worked on Nero. He joined the team for the latest game, "DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY", as a supervisor. His other works include "The King of Fighters" and "SENGOKU BASARA" series as well as "DINO CRISIS 2".

TATSUYA YOSHIKAWA

He has been working as a freelancer since he quit Capcom in 2011. He showed his wide range of skills by serving as both a character designer and art director for "DMC 4". He is also known for the "BREATH OF FIRE" and "MEGA MAN X" series.

the "DMC" team told me they were starting the next game and asked me to join. I was already a fan of the series, so I was quite excited to work on a "DMC" game myself.

Hiraki: Did you play "DMC 2"?

Yoshikawa: Dante's face was a little too scary, so I couldn't get into that one. (laughs) He looked nicer in "DMC 3", but I felt I couldn't play that one since I hadn't finished "DMC 2". I guess I followed the general pattern that a lot of players did. (laughs) But "DMC (1)" was so well-received by the company at the time. The stylish, flashy, cinematic action was cleverly done, and Capcom had never really had a title like that before, so I was pumped to finally get involved in the series.

Nara: Around when development on "DMC 4" began, Director Itsuno [Hideaki Itsuno; see page 220] was talking about trying to pull you onto the team, Yoshikawa-san. Were you finishing up another project at the time?

Yoshikawa: It must have been "Mega Man Powered Up"? Maybe "Mega Man: Maverick Hunter X". I remember doing illustrations for something at the time, so it was probably one of those two.

Nara: Itsuno was the only one who knew you, and apparently he had you drawing for us in secret? You did the Dante with a shaved head.

Hiraki: Wait. That picture came before Yoshikawa-san officially joined the team?

Nara: Yeah.

Yoshikawa: A lot of different projects were in their respective planning stages back then. Also, I was from the console division, whereas the "DMC" team members were arcade division



people, so I barely knew anyone. I came to know the staff little by little through talking with them as we all moved forward with "DMC 4".

Nara: When "DMC 3" ended, most of us felt like we had nothing to do. (laughs) We'd poured our souls into "DMC 3" and had nothing left to give, and that's when the gears for "DMC

4" started to turn. We invited people like Yoshikawa-san, Hiraki, and others from all over in order to bring new blood and some innovation to the team, hoping to make something really new.

Hiraki: I honestly wasn't having it. (laughs) We'd just done "DMC 3" and "SE", and now we were being told to start anew. I felt drained and unmotivated. (laughs)

Nara: I don't think most of the team ever imagined that they themselves would be making the next game. So when "DMC 4" came around, we had no idea what to do. (laughs)

Hiraki: Right? It was like, "More new styles and weapons? Are you kidding me?" (laughs) We'd given everything we had with "DMC 3".

Nara: I was so glad when Yoshikawa-san and Hiraki joined. I knew they could help us out somehow. (laughs)

Was the protagonist of "DMC 4" always going to be a brand-new character?

Yoshikawa: We were talking about that early on, but on the other hand, we also knew that Dante had to be in the game.

Hiraki: We also knew we needed to add something new to plain old Dante, because the staff was just so unmotivated.

Nara: It was really gloomy for a while, and we felt like we were just wasting time.

Hiraki: But we knew that everyone would probably get excited about a new protagonist, and at some point Kobayashi gave us the go-ahead with that. I remember that his condition was that a new protagonist was fine as long as Dante was still involved somehow.

So that's how Nero was born?

Nara: There was still a ton to think about after coming up with Nero, so it's not exactly like the good times started rolling. (laughs)

Hiraki: He's not kidding. (laughs)

Nara: It was rough... Dante needed to be included, which meant we needed a character who could somehow steal the spotlight from him. But what kind of guy could do that? (laughs)

Yoshikawa: If you look at my designs for Nero, you can see how meandering the process was. It wasn't a problem with my drawings so much as it was the keen realization that I was a newcomer to the series. Maybe because the rest of the staff was so familiar with the series already? They had their preconceptions, their struggles, and the things they really wanted to accomplish here, but this was my first time working on a "DMC" game, so I had to somehow understand the flow of the series and apply that to the work I was told to do, which was hard. Talks with the rest of the staff went just fine, but I always felt like there was some hidden meaning in their words that I just couldn't pick up on. The early stages of development were tough because I was so unfamiliar with the conventions of "DMC". At that point, everything I did was done in the hopes of just getting my drawings approved; being told that they felt "right".

Nara: Your design notes often asked, "Coat or no coat?" "Is red necessary?" Things like that.

Yoshikawa: Other considerations included details like rolled-up sleeves and how something would look on-screen, as well as the ease with which players would be able to move the characters around. I was completely focused on the particulars when it came to movements. I wanted to specialize in one style of expression, one that I believed to be specific to arcade games, and all of my designs revolved around that notion. As I worked on various things, however, the other considerations I mentioned finally got through to me, and I learned a lot from those revelations. I think you can see that shift in course if you look through all of the designs I have previously done. My lack of true understanding when it comes to design work is quite obvious in my earliest designs. The designs themselves may look okay on paper, but you can tell how my early designs really didn't take into consideration how they would look once they were adapted to the screen, nor how they would look once given motion.

So that's how Nero's design came about, but what about his characterization?

Hiraki: I was thinking about motion from the very start. Once we decided on having a new protagonist, but before his design was finalized, I was determined to make a violent character, one brimming with power and using every ounce of his strength to swing his sword around.

Nara: (laughs)

Yoshikawa: Hearing that now reminds me; Itsuno told me to assume the complete opposite. Which is really evident in my earlier designs. (laughs)

Hiraki: I actually spoke to Itsuno directly about it. I asked if I could give the new protagonist violent motions and he said, "Sure." In other words, he was approving Nero's current motions with Yoshikawa-san's early designs.



(laughs) He felt it was plausible for a thin-framed pretty boy to perform the movements we had prepared for Nero, and that it would be found acceptable. It's because Dante was involved that I was so intent on these violent motions for Nero. I knew that to the player, Nero's ordinary combo attacks had to feel distinctly different from Dante's. If his moves felt more delicate, then people seeing him for the first time would decide that he was weaker than Dante. The whole time, I was thinking that he'd never be accepted as the new protagonist without this momentary spark of rage, brutality, and insanity.

Nara: I remember discussing that. How the new protagonist should have a hidden side to him. How he'd be unable to control the demonic power inside, turning him almost into a different person entirely, and how that would feel really good if implemented in the gameplay.

Hiraki: The second half of his combo is like he's gone into berserker mode.

Nara: We even proposed giving him a hood.



Hiraki: Yeah. We had so many grand visions. (laughs) He's a descendant of Sparda, but we weren't sure whether to give him Dante's or Vergil's color scheme. Dante is in the game, of course, so we went with Vergil's colors combined with the more brutal motions. Then we started thinking about making him change based on the player's style of play; he could become a protective paladin type or descend into madness and darkness.

Yoshikawa: The job would've been no sweat if I'd been this excited about it back then. (laughs) But I wasn't well-acquainted with any of you, so I didn't know what to expect. That wasn't much fun. (laughs)

Hiraki: What? I thought we became fast friends. (laughs)

Yoshikawa: I feel that way now; like we don't have to say much to understand exactly what one of us is talking about, but it wasn't like that then. I couldn't get inside your heads at all. Not even to the point of knowing when you were joking or being serious. (laughs) So it was rough for me. Plus, I had deadlines and all these different things to draw. I was really figuring things out as I went.

Ikawa: I remember Yoshikawa-san commenting on the face models for Dante and Nero that I'd made. Then I'd retouch them based on his advice and go back to him for final approval. That was a process we repeated countless times. (laughs) I was responsible for both Dante's and Nero's models, and I was working on them throughout the entire development period. Each one must have taken around half a year. It was just that much work. I had to fine-tune even their teeth a bunch of times to make sure they didn't look stupid.

Yoshikawa: Yeah. That sounds about right.

Hiraki: I had to work with the models too, but I never knew which version of them I was looking at. Notes saying "This is the old texture" meant nothing to me. So I was always going to the modelers for confirmation.

Ikawa: I think Dante's and Nero's face models look a lot like their modeler; although the man himself would deny it. (laughs)

members to the series. Yoshikawa-san, as the art director, what were you going for with them in particular?

Yoshikawa: The "DMC" series is set in the present, but there has always been this feeling that it doesn't necessarily have to be, given its medieval elements. I've always been a fan of the fantasy genre and medieval knights, myself. Even if they weren't at the core of "DMC", I thought that those elements - if used well - could add something to the mood. The "Order", in particular - that word alone - is a good example of that medieval edge I was going for. I did a lot of research on vestments, cloaks, and other pieces of clothing with inherent meaning, and I sought to fuse that nicely with modern garb. I was especially careful about that balance. Make it all look too antiquated, and it wouldn't seem original; make it too original, and the designs would have no sense of place. That was tricky, and I grappled with those concepts as I drew. I had a lot of other staff members drawing at the time, and they would submit ideas as we moved forward. Those early sketches didn't just come from me; I think the breadth in style is evident. Sanctus' early designs were especially funny. (laughs) I love the one where he's standing, with all these cybernetic attachments.



The community almost feels Amish [a sect of Christianity that forgoes cars, electric lights, and other modern technology in favor of preserving a simpler lifestyle] in nature. Was that intentional?

Yoshikawa: Absolutely. We brought up the Amish early on, although the goal was never to focus on emulating them too much. I think any given religion represents a closed-off space, in a way. The Order tends to dress its knights in these flashy costumes, but there's a slightly modern sense to them. If they were really shut off from the world, there wouldn't be any modern elements in their costumes at all, right? Those designs were meant to show that the Order has adapted to modern times while still retaining their gaudiness. That was our goal there.

The story unfolds in the fictional religious state of Fortuna. Are those beautiful townscapes based on any real-world locations?

Hiraki: Didn't we send someone on a research trip to Turkey?

Ikawa: I believe five people from the backgrounds team went to Rome and the Vatican in Italy, and then Istanbul and Cappadocia in Turkey.

Hiraki: I'm jealous of them. (laughs)

Nara: Well, that's the kind of privilege you have as a background artist. (laughs) There's nothing like that for motion artists.

Hiraki: The farthest a motion artist gets to go is the motion capture room. (laughs) Our expeditions take us as far as the building's 16th floor.

Nara: Those background guys are lucky. (laughs)

✚ THE PROMISES OF NEXT-GEN SYSTEMS AND THE RESULTING PRESSURE

"DMC 4" was the first game in the series to be released on the PS3 and Xbox 360, and the more advanced hardware meant greater possibilities for the game. Was it fun being able to do so much more in terms of modeling and motion? What was the mood in the office at the time?

Ikawa: The idea at the time was that the PS3 was about three times as powerful as the PS2, so any game we made should likewise be three times as good. We called this the "3x Problem", and it often came up in discussions. When it comes to textures and polygon counts, should we just multiply everything by three and call it a day? So, I wouldn't quite say it was "fun" knowing we could do so much more... (laughs) Improving a game's visuals doesn't directly lead to an automatic, proportional increase in its quality. It's not that simple.

Nara: Gameplay on the PS3 was supposed to be as crisp as pre-rendered cutscenes on the PS2. We'd never come up against a workload like that before. (laughs)

Ikawa: "DMC 4" was also our first time working with MT Framework.

Nara: There was this shocking impression that next-gen systems were so incredibly powerful, but they weren't really. (laughs)

Hiraki: Yeah, not so much. (laughs)

Ikawa: Wasn't the video of Berial presented at TGS [Tokyo Game Show] running at 5 FPS?

Hiraki: It was pretty glorious.

Ikawa: Even though it was just Dante and Berial, too. (laughs) We were like, "Is this good enough?" We were so nervous about it at the office, so when we finally saw it presented at TGS, it was like a miracle had occurred. (laughs)



How did the PS3 and Xbox 360 affect motion work?

Nara: Motion was never as much trouble as modeling. There were just more joints in general.

Ikawa: Like in fingers, for example.

Nara: Right, like in fingers. Beyond ordinary human joints, there were also some supplementary ones to help make the twists and turns of body parts look more realistic. Faces also became a lot more presentable and capable of various expressions. But no one had it harder than the modelers. For a while they held onto the hope that, with the next-gen consoles, the increased joints would automatically lead to more natural motions, but...

Hiraki: That was wrong. (laughs) We all thought that Nero's coat would move automatically. That was the assumption during development, so the modelers didn't design it to purposely stay out of the way; they designed it to be very much in the way, and the visuals looked a lot nicer for it. But that joy was short-lived for me. (laughs) The automatic movement didn't end up working, so I had to do it the hard way, wondering the whole time why it failed... grumbling as I worked. (laughs) Oh, and Nero's face also had a lot of joints in it.

Ikawa: About 250, I believe.

✚ KEEPING IT MEDIEVAL WHILE ADAPTING TO THE TIMES

"DMC 4" introduces "The Order of the Sword" and its

Was that particular to Nero?

Ikawa: No. All of the characters had about that many, but their respective placements helped make each character unique.

Hiraki: Next-gen consoles were supposed to have all these capabilities, but in reality, they didn't. (laughs)

Ikawa: We learned that the hard way. (laughs)

Hiraki: We were tempted to just give up and say, "This isn't what we were promised." (laughs)

Nara: Because motion precision just kept getting worse and worse.

Hiraki: Right. We aimed too high with our ideas and then had to dumb everything down. Next-gen consoles weren't all they were cracked up to be. (laughs)

Nara: I'll say... (laughs)

Ikawa: They promised us dream machines that could do anything, but it was all just talk. (laughs) As soon as I thought of something awesome and started working on it, I'd hit that ceiling. (laughs) We knew the players out there would have the same expectations of next-gen consoles that we did at first, too. That put considerable pressure on us.

Yoshikawa: For my part, I didn't draw page after page of designs because we were working with a next-gen console. I did it in order to get the whole team on the same page about the images we were going for. That strategy was effective, so I can't say that doing those drawings was all that terrible. But I did often struggle to capture each character's individuality, which was my biggest concern. I needed to make sure that my drawings could be understood by the modelers. Also, because the game was fully 3D, I needed a lot of supplementary materials. I'd had experience with the fantasy setting thanks to "Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter", but this was on an entirely different level. I touched on this before, but with pure fantasy, there's a lot more leeway when it comes to designs. However, I was going for the medieval look infused with contemporary stylings, and portraying that was often difficult.

What about the process of going from 2D designs to 3D models?

Ikawa: The visuals in "DMC" aren't meant to be photorealistic. There's something slightly cartoonish about them, and we tried to preserve that design element while adding a bit of realism. So we took Yoshikawa-san's designs and added a bit more detail to them while making them 3D. This was made more challenging by the increased specs of the PS3. Capcom didn't possess extremely high-resolution assets at the time, so we bought actual cloth samples from vendors and took pictures of them to use as textures. Character faces are the hardest. They're supposed to look fairly real but with something outlandish about them. They're not supposed to look overly "cool" or "cute". Lighting plays a big role, as certain angles can make any given face look awful. The process of making a character's face involves a lot of trial and error. One of Capcom's strengths is how it puts out quality characters unlike any made by foreign developers.

Yoshikawa: Yeah, faces are something I think modelers struggle with. I was personally a fan of the models in "DMC 4", much like Japanese players were. The models have that realism that foreigners go for but also that distinct face modeling that the Japanese love. They were definitely worth all the hard work. On the whole, I think Dante and Nero came out really well.

Ikawa: Even if the models are realistic, they can be stylized with more fanciful motions, but that alone isn't enough. Character design in "DMC" is such that even if they're overly realistic, there's still something "off" about them. But then the problem becomes balancing that with motion. You know how

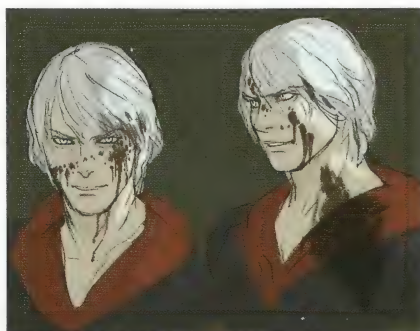


the characters make all sorts of poses in the cutscenes? If the models and motions aren't perfectly meshed, that sort of thing just looks bad.

✚ THE CHARACTERS' PARTICULARS

I'd like to ask about the design points and particulars of the main characters of "DMC 4". Let's start with Nero.

Yoshikawa: Nero was a character we all made collectively, so we all struggled together. One challenge I believe we overcame was how a character seen as a handsome man in Japan could be poorly-received overseas for being too feminine-looking. Those feminine aspects could easily be overemphasized if we tried too hard to make him a character the Japanese audience would like, so figuring out how to avoid that was difficult. Experimenting with things like that is definitely linked to making a character stand out. Having a character with Nero's design make these cruel-looking faces creates a sort of mismatch that's actually really interesting. I think we achieved a really nice balance in that sense, even looking back now.



Ikawa: Right. A character with features like Nero's tends to be seen as delicate by Western audiences. I get the feeling that Westerners are into big, muscled men who tend to look much older than a Japanese character of supposedly the same age. Nero fell right into that trap, and we had to figure out a way to balance him. We adjusted his physique so that his slenderness wouldn't be particularly noticeable to the casual observer. It took a lot of brushing up, a little bit at a time, to keep him from looking too young or too delicate.

Hiraki: At one point we experimented with a more muscular Nero, but people still said he looked slender on-screen.

Nara: I was like, "You're seriously still saying he looks thin?" (laughs)

Hiraki: We actually made him pretty beefy during the modeling stage, but he still looked frail in-game. It seemed like no matter how much we beefed him up, people weren't going to change how they saw him. Tinkering with that precarious balance is what led to the final product.

Yoshikawa: Nero was extra hard because of Dante's mere existence. Dante was solidly built, so Nero had to be too, while also being slightly younger. Those minute modifications were rough.

Ikawa: Thanks to that effort, though, I think we achieved a really good balance with Nero. He's a strong character.

What was special about Nero's Devil Trigger form?

Yoshikawa: This applies to Dante as well, but I wanted to take the Devil Trigger forms in this game to the next level compared to "DMC (1)", "2", and "3". I considered whether the forms should clearly resemble demons or, rather, heroes. Should the designs be detailed enough that action figures can be made out of them? Those were the points I mulled over while designing. I thought about how to visually represent the two characters' respective attributes and personalities. The various designs are filled with those representative aspects.

Ikawa: Even now, I think Nero's Devil Trigger form is really cool-looking.

Nara: You can see traces of that hood design that I mentioned before. I finally got to use it here. (laughs) The gimmick with the scabbard, too... This form was a way to include a number of elements we'd thought up. (laughs)



Yoshikawa: There were also plans to give Dante a Majin form; that was brought up early on. It would've been a grade above his normal Devil Trigger form. We made progress on the designs, but the idea was canned in the end. (laughs)

Nara: The idea didn't last long at all. (laughs)

Ikawa: We actually had the models for it partially done because we were ahead of schedule.

Yoshikawa: I was relatively fond of the designs. They emphasized his coat - something that Dante and Nero have in common - and had these insect-like wings attached. Insects and reptiles are motifs commonly found in demon designs throughout history, so I liked how the wings cleverly incorporated a bit of that "demon" aspect into the Devil Trigger form.

The rough sketches would imply that a lot of trial and error went into the heroine, Kyrie. Was that the case?

Hiraki: We struggled a lot with her, hence the large number of sketches.

Nara: For sure. She began as a caregiver for children but wound up as a songstress.

Yoshikawa: There are many design elements to Kyrie. She is, at once, the embodiment of compassion; Nero's lover; a girl with a plain style; and a beautiful girl who symbolizes devotion to one's religion.

Ikawa: Itsuno had quite the vision for her. She's like a mother, but also a big sister, but also Nero's girlfriend... It was hard to know which elements to focus on. (laughs) He even wanted to give her glasses at one point. (laughs)

Hiraki: At one point I suggested giving her a dark side, and Itsuno said, "Absolutely not. She's just your ordinary, cute heroine."

Yoshikawa: People would be sure to balk if she was just this self-aggrandizing, world-class beauty, so we wanted to make her seem more like the genial girl next door. With all these different orders coming in, though, I said, "How'm I s'posed t'combine all this?" (laughs) The final product was basically a fusion of all the drawings people had been doing based on those key motifs.

Nara: We had him draw up quite a few different variations, some with more obvious imperfections.

Yoshikawa: Yup. (laughs) If Nero's motif was "wildness", then Kyrie's were "caring", "self-love", "compassion", and "kindness".

Nara: She's the type who could put a stop to Nero's antics and give him a good scolding.

Hiraki: I bet that without Kyrie, Nero would have followed a path similar to Vergil's. He only puts up with the Order grudgingly because of Kyrie and Credo. She's his main connection to the human world and his only motivation to fight, like when he drop-kicks Dante because Kyrie is in danger. If Kyrie hadn't been there, he would have just put his headphones on and wandered off. "Not my business, not my problem."

Nara: That really would be like Vergil, huh?

Hiraki: I bet that if Kyrie were to die somehow, he'd go to the demon world and start saying, "Give me power!" (laughs)

Ikawa: Even after Kyrie's design was finalized, making her model was still difficult.

Yoshikawa: Ikawa-kun finished up Kyrie for me in the end, so I believe him.

Ikawa: She needed to be characterized as the heroine, even though there was little in the way of gameplay and scenarios to help make that role obvious. I had fun worrying about whether to give her droopy eyes or sharp eyes; that sort of thing. She had to be beautiful or cute enough for everyone to clearly understand that she's the heroine, but Credo is her brother, so would she have the same nose? The same lips? I spent a long time fiddling with these subtle imperfections while still keeping her attractive. Itsuno's negative reactions pained me. "Yeah... no no no no no, yeah..." It was harsh.

Nara: It's because she wasn't as straightforward as Lady or Trish. (laughs) Originally, we actually had a different character entirely in the opening. The songstress was going to be someone else.

Ikawa: But there just wasn't enough time, so the other songstress was scrapped.

Nara: So we quickly swapped in Kyrie as the songstress in the cathedral during the opening. All it took was some little details like giving her a flowing outfit to establish this additional role for her.

Ikawa: The pendant Nero gives her as a present was another element that we added later. We couldn't have anticipated that addition, which is why the early designs have her with a brooch instead. The brooch vanished when the pendant was added.



Hiraki: That was Nero's screw-up. (laughs) Why give her a pendant when she already has a brooch?

Nara: That's so like Nero, though. (laughs)

Hiraki: He's not the type to stare at ladies' chests. Like how he averts his eyes in the scene where Gloria sheathes her knife.

Ikawa: For a while, I thought Kyrie might actually fight at some point, so I tried putting a slit in her skirt and adjusting its length.

Yoshikawa: Right, because I drew her assuming she couldn't fight at all.

Ikawa: I think she's the first "DMC" character who needs to be protected from start to finish.

Nara: She's even protected in the ending (the credits). (laughs)

What about Kyrie's brother, Credo?

Yoshikawa: Credo wasn't too hard for me. He took time, sure, but I had all the key motifs I needed, and finding ways to implement them in his design was actually fun. He's high-strung; he's the leader of the knights; etc. That was all decided from the start, so I began by trying to show those themes in his face. The fact that he's on the verge of balding is proof that he's high-strung, for instance.

Nara: Who was quicker to design, Nero or Credo?

Hiraki: Credo, I think.

Nara: I remember marveling at just how different his face was in this picture. In that sense, Credo was easy to understand and, therefore, a quick character to take care of.



Yoshikawa: Right, right. (laughs) Nero's outfit was originally just a darker version of the normal Order uniform, but we decided that Nero should be more unique, so his Order uniform was just used for the other members.

Nara: That's why Nero's outfit is so jumbled. (laughs)

Yoshikawa: It's supposed to look like he designed it himself.

Agnus has an interesting design.

Yoshikawa: Every designer, including myself, had his or her own approach for Agnus. He's a mad scientist; he makes funny faces; etc. Those key themes led the design process, so he wasn't too hard. The pictures here are the rough sketches that everyone came up with when prompted. They're all different interpretations of his face.



Hiraki: We talked about how making the mad scientist somewhat macho could be fun.

Yoshikawa: I remember that. (laughs)

Nara: His voice actor looked just like him. (laughs) It was actually the voice actor's idea to give him a stammer.

Yoshikawa: He was just a fun character to design; even his demon form was interesting. He's packed full of conventions and tropes, and he doesn't betray your expectations.

Hiraki: Mission 6 is when you fight all those Gladiuses in Agnus' lab, right? Agnus watches from the other side of the glass; he gets excited, sad, surprised... and all of his reactions are very animated, with a lot of motion. But he was too far away to be seen clearly, so I asked the stage people to put a big projection monitor in that room, which I think they resented.

Nara: You couldn't see him at all when he stumbled and fell on his rear. (laughs) There was no way we could let such a spirited performance go unseen, and you couldn't see him unless you jumped up and stuck to the glass. (laughs) We had a lot of fun with Agnus, even his oddly drab demon form. (laughs)

Hiraki: Yet he thinks he's the most beautiful of all those who have undergone an Ascension Ceremony.

Nara: Even though the most beautiful is actually Credo.

Yoshikawa: That demon form of his actually gave me trouble. Initially, I had this grand plan for him; he was going to be giant, with all these added parts.

Hiraki: And as he gets more and more grotesque, he's still totally convinced that he's pretty. Also, he's by no means a pro at fighting, so we intentionally made his motions in his demon form clumsy and amateurish, especially when he's swinging a sword.

How about Gloria?

Yoshikawa: I believe it was Nara-kun who told me to make her symbolize lightning and have fluffy wings? Everyone threw a bunch of ideas at me, including one about how she should sheathe her weapon at her thigh. (laughs)

Nara: That one was from the director, Shimomura. (laughs) He had orders for a weapon of a specific size, but we'd already done the motion capture for it, right? I was wondering what his angle was, and it turned out to be the whole sheathing-at-the-thigh thing. (laughs)

Yoshikawa: He wanted the weapon to fold up, and I said that was ridiculous. (laughs) Gloria was a product of all those ideas, added one at a time, in order. Whereas Trish is fair-skinned, Gloria is swarthy, which contrasts nicely with the Order's white outfits. Then, of course, there's the bit about her true identity being Trish.

Nara: I thought the string crossing her chest was a nice innovation. Like Trish's zig-zag lightning bolt.

Yoshikawa: For some reason, I'm always trying to fit zig-zags into my designs. Take a look at my past works and you'll see how many times I've used that motif. I must really like zig-zags.

What about the mastermind behind it all, Sanctus?

Yoshikawa: Everyone had ideas for him, and we argued a lot. He's another one that we all made together, in a sense. Personally, I think the kindness and compassion that is characteristic of popes and high priests is evident in his face. The fundamental idea behind his design is the startling transformation that occurs when a person who usually appears to be very kind suddenly contorts his face and becomes terrifying. Or how even a kind-looking face can take on darker undertones once you know the truth behind its owner. For example, the way his eyes crinkle when he smiles looks really forced and affected. Sure, that's an easy way to show his true nature, but is there anything wrong with that? I considered questions like that and tried out a number of different strategies. Like, "Would it really be a big deal if everyone knew he was evil from the start?"

In "DMC 4", you really get the feeling that Dante is a veteran at all this.

Yoshikawa: Dante was hard. It was clear that his heyday as a big, Hollywood-like action star, represented by "DMC (1)", "2", and "3", had passed. So I worked hard to bring him back in style. He's around 40 years old here, with the experience, knowledge, and physical abilities to match. Dante's still in top form.

But we've got Nero as the new protagonist, so I knew that Dante couldn't be doing too much more than giving support from the sidelines. I incorporated all those factors into his design.

Were you mindful of the chronological order of the games in the series and the precedents that set?

Yoshikawa: Nara-kun and Ikawa-kun helped guide me in terms of overall "DMC" design trends, so I was able to shave off a lot of design elements, making the designs simpler and sharper. For example, I would've thought that a character with a sword would need a scabbard for sure, but they told me that things like that really aren't necessary, especially if they clutter up the design and make the character look bad.

Nara: "DMC 4" is undoubtedly set after "DMC (1)". The order is generally accepted as "3", "1", then "4". As for "DMC 2", well... who knows. (laughs)

Ikawa: That one has to be a parallel universe. (laughs)

Nara: Hopefully we'll find a good fit for it eventually. (laughs)

"DMC 4" introduces Nero as a new protagonist and places Dante squarely on the sidelines, but what did you watch out for when portraying the two of them together?

Yoshikawa: I was sure to always show Nero going all-out, with Dante being more laid back. It's always a spectacle when they show up together, and I think they have this great balance that's even evident in the rough sketches for the promotional art. Looking back, the compositions where they're together are able to communicate quite a bit about the two. Their expressions and respective roles in the story are clear, which helps to demonstrate the gap between the two. This is a good example of what you can do with mindful placement of already informative models.

Nara: I think she looks like a mother here. (laughs) With that troublesome hair tied behind her back, she's a lot easier to animate.

Ikawa: Hiraki would've had a lot less trouble if Trish had looked like this in "DMC (1)". (laughs)



Hiraki: Absolutely. (laughs) The zipper on her top is juxtaposed against Gloria's zig-zag string. I think that's a key design point.

How about Lady, who has really grown up in a lot of ways?

Yoshikawa: With my additions, I wanted to make her less a girl and a more a businesswoman. She's another character that I designed with input from everyone. But sometimes I had to reject suggestions, because I didn't want to change her fundamental image. My additions included sunglasses to hide her heterochromia, short shorts to show off her thighs, and the gun magazines lining her waist like a skirt. It was easy to build on her image from "DMC 3" to create a more grown-up Lady.

Ikawa: "DMC 4" is probably the most enjoyable project I've worked on. (laughs)

Hiraki: I've never seen a modeler make short shorts quite that short before. (laughs) I wonder how many extra joints that required. (laughs)

Ikawa: Don't "short shorts" imply that her butt pokes out when she moves her thighs?

Hiraki: Um, how about we strike this little bit of conversation from the record. (laughs)

Ikawa: (laughs) Having her in short shorts meant straddling that delicate balance between showing her butt and not showing her butt, which required adjusting a lot of motion joints.



Nara: I remember discussing with Hiraki the picture where they're both sitting on a sofa. At a glance, you can tell from their respective sitting positions the difference between their personalities. I'll never forget that.

Hiraki: For sure.

There aren't many rough sketches of Trish.

Yoshikawa: I wasn't told too much about how to design her. I asked Itsuno-san if I should make her cute, and he replied, "Yes, please." So I went and made her cute. (laughs) I never got much input otherwise. The rough sketches were simple, so I didn't feel that I needed many of them.

Ikawa: Trish is the series' sexiest gal. She's the product of her creators' love and the hardware specifications at the time. Of course, we owe a lot to the hard work put into Trish back in "DMC (1)".

✚ MEMORIES OF "DMC 4"

What aspects of your respective work on "DMC 4" were you each particularly fond of? What left an impression on you?

Yoshikawa: On the whole, the experience was exhausting. (laughs) It was a very difficult project. The layouts for the promotional images were a lot of fun to design, though. Placing the finished models in arrangements that will get the fans excited is something I specifically studied how to do, and taking care of the workflow was also fun because so much of it was done cooperatively, like creating characters alongside the motion artists and modelers. What's more, the materials I was working with for those promotional images were actual models used in-game; the layouts were made entirely with those, so that was fun. It's not like new models had to be made in order to create those images. The in-game ones were good enough as-is, something that was made possible by the fact that we were working with a next-gen console. The final promotional images were even more polished than the drawings I'd done, which was amazing. As far as characters go, I really like Credo's demonic form. I struggled with Nero's and Dante's Devil Trigger forms, but it was the exact opposite with Credo's transformation. His basic concept and construction came from Hiraki-san, but I was allowed to work in my own ideas and finishing touches.

Hiraki: Angelo Credo is a cool one, isn't he?

Yoshikawa: I think we did well portraying Credo as an ultimate force of good in contrast to Nero and Dante's Devil Trigger modes. One look at this guy and you're convinced he's fighting for justice, right? (laughs) I really like that he's actually a demon. I love when we're able to present that sort of disconnect via enemy designs.



Hiraki: Remember how we argued about whether or not Credo should utilize Angelos when he comes to capture Nero?

Nara: I remember that.

Hiraki: Someone thought it made sense to place enemies at that point in the stage, but Credo's main motion artists, as well as Nara, Ikawa, and myself were absolutely opposed to the idea.

Ikawa: Yup. (laughs)

Nara: That's the ever-raging battle between gameplay and story context. (laughs)

Hiraki: Credo would feel responsible and say, "I'll take care of this myself," right? He's a straightforward character like that. At first, someone wanted him to bring his lackeys along, send them to capture Nero, and only jump in if they failed.

Nara: But Credo would never do something so cowardly. That's what we argued.

Hiraki: As far as my own work went, I was really satisfied with Nero's standard cutting attacks and his ordinary combo with the Red Queen. His "Snatch" motion, too. I actually made those standard cutting attacks before TGS. Up until that point, a lot of people on the team still weren't

on board with the idea of a new protagonist, but as soon as they tried out those attacks of his, they saw how it could really work. That gave me a lot of confidence. I was glad to know they felt that this new protagonist was cool in a very different way from Dante. With the Snatch move, you've got three basic motions: stretch, grab, and yank. I was really worried about how to portray those. Of course, it all runs very smoothly in the finished product, so it wouldn't even occur to anyone to think that I had to consider how far the arm should stretch and how long it should take, how much power should be put into the grab and yank, and all sorts of other gameplay specifications. And then they told me to just do it however I like. (laughs) Okay, however I like, then! That's how I arrived at the Snatch you see today, and I'm quite fond of it.

Then there's Berial. I worked on that boss battle with Berial's lead artist, and we decided to make Nero's Buster attack on Berial exactly the same as the Scarecrow Buster sequence. The toss up + slam down movement is the same whether it's used on a minor enemy or a boss, which is something I really wanted to show in that fight. That was made possible thanks to Berial's motion artist. But after all that work, people didn't even end up using the move on him... (laughs)

Nara: Right. Without a button prompt, nobody realized it was possible.

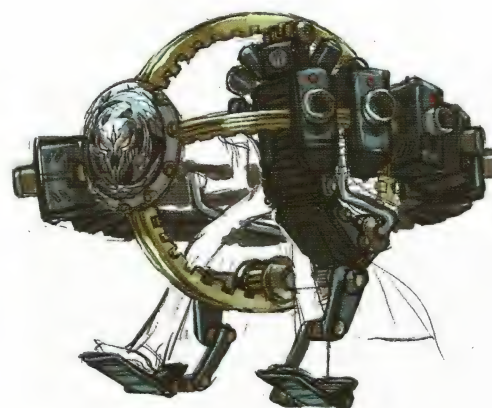
Hiraki: Nobody expected the giant Berial to be thrown around like a common enemy by the Buster attack. I was watching people play the demo at TGS, and no one ever did it. (laughs) All I could think while watching them play was, "You used Buster on the Scarecrows before, right? So now just use it on Berial!" If even a single person had done it, that would have set off a chain reaction of understanding that I would have loved to see.

Nara: I'm glad I was able to do Dante justice here, even after working on him so much in "DMC 3". There was this constant feeling that I somehow had to surpass the Dante of "DMC 3", so I'm happy with the more refined form I was able to give him in this game. I also got a chance to make a lot of fun weapons this time around.

Hiraki: We're both pretty proud of ourselves, huh? (laughs)

Nara: The briefcase weapon Pandora was fun. Figuring out what it should transform into was great. (laughs) The model data came with animations included, like one that showed the case turning into rocket cannons. Ikawa and I played around with that a lot, saying, "What if we made it transform like this? Or this?" (laughs) Ikawa did a great job with that one.

Ikawa: The designs we received were ridiculous. (laughs)



Nara: Ridiculous indeed. (laughs)

Yoshikawa: I agree. (laughs)

Ikawa: It was like, "This is a briefcase...? The only thing they have in common is that general shape." (laughs)

Yoshikawa: The first order I got was straightforward. "Do this like this." In my first batch of rough

Hiraki: You had such a triumphant look on your face when you presented her. "Well!!? How's this look!?" I believe I responded by saying she looked very erotic. (laughs)

Ikawa: I kind of had my own secret concept for Lady. Yoshikawa did such a great job of depicting her as a more mature woman, and her breast size did get larger than her "Devil 3" days. In North American games, the 3D models of characters with larger breasts tend to turn out looking pigeon chested. I consciously leaned a bit in that direction to emphasize the fact that she is not wearing a bra... (laughs) Apparently this caught the attention of just about every player, and the feedback was intensely passionate in both good ways and bad. I guess I can't say I was too surprised since that's the kind of reaction I was going for. (laughs) I'm pretty sure I devoted more time to Lady than I did to Kyrie, the main heroine. (laughs)

Nara: Even though she barely appears in the game. (laughs)

Ikawa: She's a straightforward character, so her face didn't give me trouble at all. That's why I could spend more time on her breasts and short shorts.

Hiraki: "Could" spend? More like "wanted to spend". (laughs)

Ikawa: People were always asking how long I was going to spend on them. (laughs) The monitor at my workstation constantly had either Lady's cleavage or short shorts displayed, because I was working on those aspects the whole time...



Hiraki: I was like, "Are you actually doing work?" (laughs)

Ikawa: I actually wanted to devote more time to Trish, but I was assigned Lady, so I poured my heart and soul into her. (laughs)

Yoshikawa: Female characters play very important roles, so even when they don't appear much, you've got to work hard on them.

Hiraki: That's just how it is when it comes to sex appeal.

Nara: It's very important.

Ikawa: Itsuno also commanded me to give it my all. (laughs)

How old did you try to portray Lady as being?

Yoshikawa: I intentionally made that unclear because the focus, rather, is on portraying these characters at their best-looking. The same goes for Dante. I just wanted him to look as strong as possible. Similarly, Trish is meant to look as attractive as possible. Lady seemed to be student age in "DMC 3", but here she's a working adult. If I had to pick a number, maybe she's 30? Perhaps 25? Around there. That's all very vague, though.

sketches, I was trying to maintain some sense of logical consistency and realism, but at some point I gave up on that. [laughs] Then I was discussing it with Ikawa-kun, and the whole thing became very outlandish and confusing.

Nara: The way it clatters around as it transforms is awesome. [laughs] Anyway, I also really like the Red Queen as a weapon. Making it rev like a motorcycle engine was a fun innovation.



Hiraki: It's provocative, and it also serves a gameplay purpose. At first, though, Nero's main weapon was just an ordinary sword, and we proposed the sword that would become the Red Queen as a secondary weapon. "Just make it the main weapon," we were told. So we took that regular sword from Nero and gave it to the Order instead, making it their standard anti-demon weapon.

Nara: The Red Queen was Hiraki's idea. It wasn't even originally made for this game; I picked it out from the materials we had stocked for potential future projects. [laughs]

Hiraki: Speaking of Nero's weapons, the Blue Rose was tough to come up with. We needed a single handgun to contrast with Dante's pair of handguns, and that involved trial and error. Finally, we arrived at the idea of having Nero's single gun shoot two bullets at once.

as much of the hands-on work as possible to the staff. I ended up making the demo models of Kyrie and Lady, and I paid due attention to their sexiness, as I was especially concerned with how the end products would turn out. [laughs] But I also had a lot to do with the weapons, and Pandora - which we mentioned before - was one that left an impression on me. I created a ton of models for that one alone. [laughs] The Red Queen and Blue Rose have a real industrial beauty to them, so those were fun too. The Red Queen was eventually made into official merchandise, but no real-life gun model of the Blue Rose was ever made, which I think is too bad. [laughs] There was talk of producing one at some point, though. I personally spent a lot of time and effort on the weapons, but all anyone else can ever remember is the time I spent on Lady. [laughs]

Hiraki: Even now, I'm like, "Wait. You worked on weapons?" [laughs]

Ikawa: Then there's the Bloody Palace mode. I'll always remember how we kept bug-checking that until everyone was able to clear it.

Nara: Everyone tried their hand at that. When it looked like someone was about to win, we'd all gather around and watch in order to learn their strategies. The tension was palpable. [laughs]

Ikawa: We'd always have L'Arc-en-Ciel [a Japanese rock band; hereinafter referred to as "L'Arc"] playing in the background as people were testing the Bloody Palace. Before we knew it, we were all fans of L'Arc. [laughs]

Hiraki: I still remember that. [laughs] As soon as I hear that intro, I get visions of the bug check room in my head. [laughs]

Nara: The game would have to be newly installed every time we bug-checked a revised ROM of it, and I think we had another L'Arc song playing during the "DMC 4" install process. That was all happening around the same time, so those songs were playing out over the whole floor.

Hiraki: But sometimes the timing was off, so the songs would sound like they were echoing. [laughs]

The release of "DMC: Devil May Cry" signaled a new start for the series, but there are many players who would love to see another sequel in the original "DMC" series.

Nara: I hope we eventually get to make that sequel. [laughs]

Ikawa: I'm in a managerial position now, so I'm generally hands-off, but I could definitely be tempted to return if I was put in charge of the "sexy stuff" department. [laughs]

All: Jiggle jiggle, right?

Hiraki: It's nice how we all thought of that. [laughs] If we could bring back all those supervisors, managers, and team leaders with the allure of "sexy stuff", a sequel just might be possible. Personally, I liked the "DMC 4" team better than any other. We really got to know each other through all those discussions, no matter how ridiculous they got. Thinking back, it was really Capcom's "dream team". I'd love to reunite that team, even if they'd probably all call me an idiot for suggesting it. [laughs]

Ikawa: Right. Because, for instance, Tomonori Takano is currently the art director for "RE 6".

Hiraki: When Takano made Frost, I believe I told him to "reduce Frost's chest size a bit".

Yoshikawa: Looking back, "DMC 4" has a ton of wild characters and some high-quality designs. It's a well-polished game.

Nara: From a business standpoint, it only makes sense to reuse its assets at least two or three more times. [laughs]

Yoshikawa: Yeah. The assets are really just that good.

Hiraki: Now that some time has passed, I think we're at the "Zeon can fight for another ten years if necessary!" level [a quote from the anime "Mobile Suit Gundam"]. These materials we created are like precious ores, and they could easily be mined for ten more years' worth of action games.

Yoshikawa: Most companies wouldn't spend nearly this much time creating their characters. The idea of "reusing" assets seems to imply that corners are being cut, but business-wise, it's a perfectly legitimate and efficient strategy.

This may be an extreme metaphor, but I get the impression that the "DMC" team's experience could be compared to how students have to make new friends every time they switch schools. You just spent an entire year working on these materials, so the thought of being unable to utilize them again is troubling.

Hiraki: Because we have to come up with new characters every time, yeah. Same goes for the minor enemies, who end up being - for lack of a better term - "discarded". With every new game it's, "What sort of enemies should we use this time?" [laughs]

I personally feel that the "DMC" series has gotten a little stale. The first game was originally going to be an "RE" game, but it was taken too far - to the point that it became something else entirely. We realized we'd actually created "DMC", so the title was changed. In that same way, I feel that another sequel to "DMC" at this point would just be something else, but with the wrong title. People could make all the "DMC" sequels they want - and have them received as such - but I wouldn't accept that. The legacy is already there, so it's especially hard. That said, I suppose if an action game came out that was genuinely stylish, cool-looking, and feel-good, it could be worthy of the title.

The "DMC" series is filled with features meant to delight the player when he or she figures them out, and they're implemented with the smallest possible amount of explicit hand-holding. Compared to the many other similar games out there, "DMC" encourages players to find their own unique playstyle via subtle on-screen details and hints. That's why the series is so beloved. As early as the design stage, the games are naturally engineered to be welcoming and not misleading for players. I think that when it comes to "DMC", the devil is in those details.

Thank you for your time.

Nara: How many times did we have to revise the shot timing with the sound effects team and the motion artists? [laughs] The office echoed with the sound of gunshots. [laughs]

Hiraki: Because it was one trigger but two shots, right? Dante's rapid-fire shots always sounded really good, but when Nero tried to shoot continuously, there were all these intervals, which just didn't sound as good as Dante's shooting. Despite the intervals, though, I wanted the two shots to ring out simultaneously. I said that I wanted the overlapping shots to sound heavier and more powerful, so the sound effects people kept offering to shorten the interval by two frames. We repeated that process many times. [laughs]

Nara: You sure did. We knew there would be some players who liked to fire rapidly, so we wanted the sound effects to clearly indicate that two shots were occurring at once. In the end, though, it only sounded like a single shot. [laughs] So many of the motions in "DMC 4" were made while working with all sorts of different team members.

Ikawa: Everyone was way too serious. I never got to say everything I wanted to. [laughs]

Nara: Is this about butts, Ikawa?

Hiraki: Or maybe boobs?

Ikawa: [laughs] My role as the lead modeler meant that I was in charge of general supervision, so I left

Interview

MISSION.6 ● THE ONES WHO LED THE CHARGE ON "DEVIL MAY CRY"

WE TAKE A LOOK BACK AT THE SERIES WITH HIDEAKI ITSUNO, THE OFFICIAL BATTLE COMMANDER OF "DEVIL MAY CRY 2", "3", AND "4", AND MOTOHIDE ESHIRO, THE PRODUCER OF "DmC: DEVIL MAY CRY".

✦ THE ESSENCE OF THE "DEVIL MAY CRY" SERIES

How did the two of you come to be involved with the "Devil May Cry" series [hereinafter referred to as "DMC"]?

Itsuno: I was brought in to help the "DMC 2" team during the second half of development, with about six months left before the deadline. That was my first time working on the series. There have been several teams where I was picked to fill a role of responsibility toward the end of development like that. The bosses came in and said, "Alright, do we have a director for 'DMC 2'?" Just as we were all thinking, "Nope. We actually don't," they said, "Okay. You do it." (laughs) Fundamentally, though, I was really just brought on in a supplementary role in order to reorganize the project. So I was certainly content in that capacity when the game was finished and released on time, but part of me was dissatisfied because I hadn't started with the project from day one. As far as I was concerned, that didn't amount to a proper level of involvement with "DMC", so I asked the company if they would give me "DMC 3" from the start, and they agreed. I got to work on "DMC 3" with the intention of handing over the reins to someone else for "DMC 4", assuming I was satisfied with "DMC 3".

And that was what happened at first. Someone else was given control of "DMC 4", but one of the bosses (a different one than with "DMC 2") said, "Dealing with the new PS3 hardware is going to be tough, so we need someone more experienced to take charge. You do it." (laughs) I wasn't particularly against the idea, so I accepted the position.

Eshiro: My first time working on the "DMC" series was as the producer for "DMC HD Collection" [hereinafter referred to as "HD"]. After that came "DmC: Devil May Cry" [hereinafter referred to as "DmC"]. Time-wise, though, work on "DmC" actually began before "HD". "DmC" was set to be developed by an overseas studio, so I was picked for the job because I already had experience working abroad.

What are your overall impressions of the "DMC" series? What do you think constitutes the essence of these games?

Itsuno: I tend to explain the series with a slightly different nuance depending on whether I'm talking to people who have never worked on it versus in-house staff members who are figuring out what to do with the next game. For example, when talking to the studio that developed "DmC", Ninja Theory [hereinafter referred to as "NT"], I said that the most important thing is that Dante is a cool guy. As such, the player should feel cool when controlling him. I made them promise never to forget that. At Capcom, on the other hand, every game is different, but we inevitably get into a conversation about the essence of "DMC". Because even at Capcom, people end up asking, "This 'essence' of 'DMC' we're always hearing about - what on earth is that?" The answer is "a death-like feeling". The essence of "DMC" is a feeling of death that pervades the visuals and atmosphere.

Eshiro: Wow. That's totally different from "DmC".





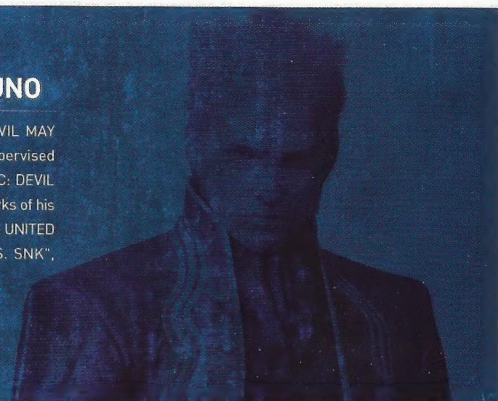
MOTOHIDE ESHIRO

The producer of "DEVIL MAY CRY HD COLLECTION" and the latest title in the series, "DmC: DEVIL MAY CRY". He has also worked on "OKAMIDEN", the "ACE ATTORNEY" series, and a number of other hit titles.



HIDEAKI ITSUNO

The director of the "DEVIL MAY CRY" series, he also supervised the development of "DmC: DEVIL MAY CRY". Other past works of his include "RIVAL SCHOOLS: UNITED BY FATE", "CAPCOM VS. SNK", and "DRAGON'S DOGMA".



Itsuno: Even with enemy designs, we have to keep in mind that these aren't "monsters" - they're "demons". That difference is an important one to think about. Even when it comes to scenery, something like "Resident Evil" is very different from the demon-filled "DMC", which is always centered around that theme of "death".

You mentioned being brought on in a supplementary role for "DMC 2", but what did that really mean?

Itsuno: That's how it was phrased, but I was really the director. [laughs] There was a lot of drama over my replacing the old director, and I have nothing but bad memories about that part in particular. [laughs] But basically, they said that nothing was getting done and that needed to change. The scenario hadn't been written, the cutscenes had yet to be shot, and they hadn't decided what to do about Dante's Devil Trigger. They had determined that the "Stinger" attack was essential, so at least they had someone who was going to take care of that. [laughs] But none of the other attacks had been worked on at all.

Eshiro: Good job getting all the rest done in just half a year, then.

Itsuno: That's why I was planning to do all I could, and in the end, the game wasn't too poorly-received. The hardcore fans of "DMC (1)" weren't exactly happy with it, but newcomers to the series liked it a lot. The people who especially liked "DMC 2" were the ones who had tried "DMC (1)" but found it too difficult and quit partway through. I read a lot of survey responses along the lines of, "People said 'DMC (1)' was awesome, but I just wasn't feeling it. I felt it in 'DMC 2', though, so thanks."

Eshiro: I played "DMC (1)" and found it to be a very difficult game. Still, it was clear how cool a character Dante was while playing as him. I'd always liked action games, and the world in this one was really cool too. I played "DMC (1)" to completion, finding it to be a full-bodied action game experience, but with "DMC 2", I got lost along the way and gave up at some point. [laughs] I've also played "DMC 3" and "DMC 4", but I haven't finished "4" yet. I'm a big fan of the series in general, but beating the games can sometimes be a big challenge. They're not easy. In the process of making "HD", I finally played all the way through "DMC 3"...

Itsuno: Pretty hard, wasn't it? [laughs]

Eshiro: Yes, it was. [laughs] But if nothing else, "DMC" is really cool thanks to Dante... even if he doesn't look all that stylish when I'm playing as him. [laughs] I'm also fond of the designs and scenarios, especially in "DMC 3". It's got that twist when a certain someone who we thought was dead comes back, the confrontation with Dante's twin brother, and the stalwart character of Lady, which were all really fun. That final battle scene with Vergil is just too cool.

"DMC 4", of course, had the improved graphics and hardware, with some awesome cutscenes and an engaging storyline. Although I still don't know the ending, because I haven't made it that far. [laughs] The promotional videos for "DMC 4" were also really cool. The music was synced perfectly with the visuals, and that's

something I don't see very often from Capcom. I get the feeling that the people who made those videos were very conscious of matching the sound with the visuals.

Itsuno: I like to do that with games I work on.

Eshiro: Ah, so we have the director to thank.

Itsuno: Ever since the "Rival Schools" series, I've made a note of directing scenes with the music in mind.

Eshiro: We tried that with "DmC", too, by using a ONE OK ROCK [a Japanese rock band] song in the promotional video. It fit perfectly, and the fans loved it. It made for a really cool ad, I think.

✦ THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY OF WORKING ON THE SERIES

Are there any particular characters or demons from the "DMC" series that have left an impression on you?

Eshiro: For me, that would be Jester. Everything about him exudes Western style, including the delivery of his lines. I also like his theatrical, exaggerated movements.

Itsuno: I like Vergil and Nero. I have an appreciation for Dante, too, of course, but I feel less of a connection with him because he's not a character I created myself. That said, I love his Majin form in "DMC 2". There were also plans to give him a "Double Devil Trigger" with another transformation stage in "DMC 4", but that idea was scrapped and all that remains is the concept art for it [see page 125]. Dante's human half is still visible in his ordinary Devil Trigger mode, but in "DMC 2" we got to see him release his true power and transform completely into a demon. Sadly, there just wasn't time to implement that in "DMC 4". [laughs]

Eshiro: Skilled players probably ended up finishing "DMC 2" without ever using Majin mode.

Itsuno: Right, because they would never trigger the transformation, which requires Dante to be down to 10% health. The trade-off is that he becomes absurdly powerful, like a Super Saiyan from "Dragon Ball".

Itsuno-san, are there any memorable stories you'd like to

share from your time working on "DMC 2", "3", and "4"?

Itsuno: If we're talking about horror stories, I've got some from each game's development to share, but they're all of different natures. With "DMC 2", my struggle was to put out a good finished product despite joining halfway through development. During "DMC 3", I gave it my all and squeezed as much as possible into the game while telling myself that if this failed, I would probably quit the industry altogether. And with "DMC 4", I was constantly worried about the new protagonist.

When explaining my relationship with "DMC" to people, I like to say that I'm not so much a parent to the series as I am a foster parent. Or maybe "stepmother" is more appropriate. [laughs] That usually seems to get the point across pretty well.

"DMC 3" is sometimes seen as "redemption" for "DMC 2". Is that not only Capcom's position, but yours as well, Itsuno-san?

Itsuno: Without "DMC 3", I would be known as "Itsuno, the director of 'DMC 2'" as far as the series is concerned. I sort of fell into that role via a deal with the higher-ups. [laughs] They agreed to put me on the "DMC 2" team, but I wouldn't be credited. I wasn't exactly happy about that arrangement - I was angry, even - but I consented and gave it my all anyway. I accomplished everything they wanted me to with "DMC 2", but objectively speaking, I wasn't satisfied. I mentioned this before, but I took on the challenge of "DMC 2" in a kind of "burning my own bridges" way, determined to pass the torch to someone else after making a successful game. Moreover, the team for "DMC 3" was a ragtag collection of in-house staff members who - despite being plenty skilled - had never worked on any blockbuster hits for the most part. They were guys who wouldn't have much Capcom-related experience to put on their resumes if they quit the company right there and then. I was also determined to quit Capcom if "DMC 3" didn't turn out well, so I tried to motivate the team with the idea that they'd get to put their names on something really great. So in that sense, we were driven. Hiring movie director Yuji Shimomura was also a winning move. The producer of "DMC 3" at the time, Tanaka-san [Tsuyoshi





Tanaka], had a great piece of advice: "Every man to his trade. When it comes to these cutscenes and the like, leave the direction to a specialist who has made that his craft." So with "DMC 3", we established the practice of outsourcing part of the development process to an outside specialist. That aspect was particularly memorable.

Eshiro: I have to say, the cutscenes from "DMC 3" on have an extra layer of depth to them.

Itsuno: In that way, we redeemed ourselves. The PS2 was in its final days, so rather than doing something amazing with that technology, we focused on utilizing technique and know-how to drive it home. More than redemption, even, it was like making a definitive piece of art.

And thanks to that definitive "DMC 3", you got to do "DMC 4".

Itsuno: "DMC 4" was largely done with the same team from "DMC 3", although everyone felt kind of burned out from "3". We were also working on "DMC 3: Special Edition" as a secondary project, but I really wasn't feeling motivated. (laughs) It wasn't that I didn't want to work on Dante anymore. Rather, I'd done everything I wanted to do in "DMC 3", so I didn't feel there was anything left to explore with Dante. "DMC 3" was very complex, offering the player four different styles to choose from, so the thought of somehow going above and beyond that seemed impossible. We also anticipated an influx of new gamers with the advent of the PS3, and would those people really go for a game with "4" in the title? The team worked to solve that particular problem, and the solution was the new protagonist. He was created not only to attract those new players, but also to motivate the team members themselves. It was like, "We're trying to surpass Dante here! Come on, you slackers! This ain't gonna cut it!" Everyone was energized and zipping around, trying to make that happen. I relaxed a little once the team was revitalized. The ball really got rolling once the new protagonist, Nero, was introduced, but that's not to say that creating him was a simple task; he was the successor to Dante, after all.

Eshiro: Sounds rough.

Itsuno: That's why even now, the "DMC 4" staff is clamoring to make a sequel starring Nero. Of course, a sequel with Dante wouldn't be bad either. I was actually scraping together a team to make "DMC 4: Special Edition" or "DMC 5", but it never panned out. Strange, huh? (laughs)

Eshiro-san, can you speak about your experiences working on "HD"?

Eshiro: I worked on "HD" with an overseas studio, and time constraints made it quite difficult. The first thing I realized is that the goal of an HD remake is to replicate the original game, but that wasn't easy with "DMC". "DMC (1)" was a title that already took the capabilities of the PS2 to their limits, so the developer of "HD" had quite a hard time redoing the code. Then we had to make sure it felt the same

even in subtle ways, which took a lot of effort. Making the text the same as the original Japanese text was also hard. We also had to consider the player expectations for this HD remake. They wanted to experience "DMC" again, but with improved visuals. We worked hard to the bitter end, adjusting everything so as not to betray those expectations.

Itsuno: And then there were the problems with the backup data.

Eshiro: Right... The PS2 was so old that some of the backup data was just plain missing. So we had to recreate parts of the game while sitting there and watching the original version, which was a pain. Mostly because the people who made it originally weren't there to help. We'd been enthusiastically proposing an HD remake for a while, but the missing backup data did cause some hesitation. (laughs) "DMC 2" and "DMC 3" were easier, because the data was there and because we also had Itsuno with us. But "DMC (1)" was rough. It hadn't had the advantage of utilizing the PS2's "hidden techniques", so it really pushed the hardware to its limits.

There were also three different studios working on "HD"; two American studios and one English studio were given "DMC (1)", "DMC 2", and "DMC 3", respectively. Coordinating work between those different locations was a challenge. When we finally finished, I was so happy I could cry. (laughs) "We really did it, somehow." It was like a miracle. We just barely managed to pull it off, too, after realizing that it wouldn't all fit onto a single disc. (laughs)

Itsuno: The Xbox 360 uses DVDs, but size constraints were still a problem.

Eshiro: We barely managed to squeeze it all onto two discs. (laughs)

✚ THE NEW "DmC", COMPLETE WITH FOREIGN "BLOOD"

I'd like to move on and discuss "DmC". First, why is the "m" in the title lowercase?

Eshiro: When NT came up with potential logo designs, that was one of the options. Some of the others had all capital letters, but the one with the lowercase "m" just looked the best. It was also a way to distinguish the game from the rest of the series, which had often been abbreviated as "DMC". A big theme in "DmC" is "rebirth", so we went with "DmC" as the title. Unfortunately, we couldn't trademark a three-letter title.

Itsuno: Because there are lots of "DMC"s in the world.

Eshiro: Right. Giving it the full title of "DmC: Devil May Cry" allowed us to trademark it. The focus of the logo was the "DmC", though, so the "Devil May Cry" part was done in small print underneath it. The "DmC" part also looks like it's done in spray paint. "Delinquent" and "rebel" were some of Dante's motifs this time around, so we

wanted the logo to look like graffiti.

Itsuno: I think magazine editors and writers were probably more peeved about the lowercase "m". I bet it gave them problems when it came to text conversion on PCs. (laughs)

Can you tell us about the look of the "DmC" world?

Eshiro: With regard to the world as a whole, Capcom didn't make any specific requests, so we simply asked NT to create their own vision of a cool world. Having said that, we couldn't have a brand new world created from scratch because we did want some hints of familiarity and continuity to tie it into the rest of the series, but we did give NT permission to reimagine the concepts we provided as reference. Some semblance of continuity was necessary, because whatever cool new world and overall style they came up with would ultimately be reflected in the storyline. Once they got a look at everything, Capcom didn't have a single issue or revision request for the world NT had created. "DmC" has such a wide variety of stages, and I imagine they included things like the distinctly Gothic architecture as a sort of homage to the rest of the series.

The city in "DmC" blends elements of cities from several different European countries, including Italy, France, Germany, England, and others. I was really impressed by NT's storyboards; they have some great designers over there. They used oil paints like it was nothing, and even the rougher illustrations could be compared to actual paintings in quality. When I saw those storyboards, I thought that they should be trying to sell those alone. (laughs) They were fast at what they did, with a good sense for the work. Very reliable.

Itsuno: The earlier games in the series were supposed to take place in modern Europe. This was never revealed in the games themselves, but the titles up to "DMC 4" are actually set in the 1980s, mostly because I didn't want to have to worry about showing cell phones or laptops. So I picked a time period where they had televisions but no cell phones. That said, the modern Europe we tried to create ended up turning into more of a fantasy setting. Much to my surprise, when "DMC (1)" was released, foreign players said that the world we had tried to make look like Europe in reality was the sort of fantasy that only the Japanese could come up with. It was just like when Americans or Europeans portray a version of Japan that makes us go, "Huh?" except in reverse.

The first four games in the series seem to take place in worlds far removed from our own, but that's not the case in "DmC", right?



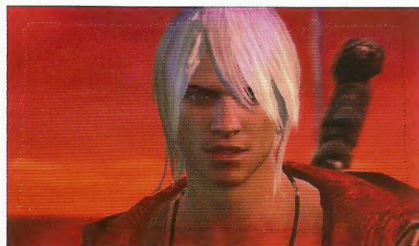
Itsuno: That was mostly due to hardware constraints. I wanted to include ordinary human NPCs in "DMC 3", but I wasn't able to do that until "DMC 4". The PS2 just wasn't capable of something like that. But then the PS3 came along and we finally had the necessary processing power to include more NPCs. The "DMC 4" team was adamant about having the action run at 60 FPS, but when it came to "DmC", the NT staff suggested that the game run at 30 FPS - not 60 - to better accommodate the game's "Limbo" world. So "DmC" was different from square one. That gave its locations and overall presentation a very different feel.

Eshiro: Our job was to take that and make it work in an interesting way. So we got to work, trying to make the action feel just as good as if it was running at 60 FPS, which took a lot of time. We explored different techniques to make an exhilarating action game where the character moves exactly how the player wants him to.

I'd like to talk about the characters in "DmC". Let's start with Dante.

Eshiro: We constructed a Dante with features (facial contours, nose, mouth) that foreign audiences would find attractive. His black hair and new hairstyle were also key points. When foreigners see a character with silky white hair, for example, it just doesn't seem real enough to them.

Itsuno: It's more than just "not real"; the character is perceived as a full-blown lunatic. A madman, if you will. Making a character's hair silver or white is all it takes to put their game in the fantasy genre. When you're trying to make Dante this badass street punk, white hair instantly crushes any sense of realism. That was the reasoning behind changing his hair this time around. Dante finds himself wearing a white wig in a cutscene, but he quickly tosses it away. That was the feeling NT was going for.



Eshiro: Like, "This is wrong." Although, I daresay the Japanese audience thought it suited him. (laughs) That was probably the most impactful design aspect.

Itsuno: As far as the action goes, the guys at NT were fans of both Dante's and Nero's styles, so they tried to create a blend of the two.

Eshiro: The decision to make Dante half-angel, half-demon was always one made by NT. They had their own vision that they worked into the scenario.

Itsuno: But not much of a vision for the gameplay itself. (laughs) Those artistic designs are all well and good, but just slapping them onto the screen doesn't amount to gameplay. We talked about how the designs they came up with had to just be a single element in the overall plan. That's what led to the final product.

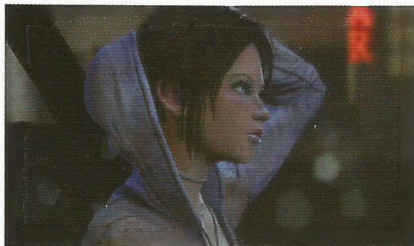
Eshiro: One important new element is the ability to switch between angel mode and demon mode and how that's actually tied into the action. We struggled with the Devil Trigger, too. To them, the Devil Trigger transformation just screamed "fantasy".

Itsuno: NT is great when it comes to pumping out pretty visuals and design concepts, but I don't think they're used to linking that to gameplay. I'd say our teams have typically been the opposite of that. We figure out what we want to do gameplay-wise, and then create designs in order to implement those gameplay features. The first half of

the development period was devoted to discussing how to use their designs and visuals to create interesting gameplay.

What about Dante's twin brother Vergil and the new heroine, Kat?

Eshiro: Kat is pretty straightforward. She's the NT team's idea of a sexy girl.



Itsuno: I think they have a thing for Asians.

Eshiro: Or rather, NT's lead modeler just really liked Kat. (laughs)

Itsuno: Yeah. A lot of NT's female characters really do resemble each other. There's Nariko [the star of "Heavenly Sword"], Trip [the heroine of "Enslaved: Odyssey to the West"], and then Kat. They all look pretty similar. (laughs)



Eshiro: I'd say Vergil is mostly unchanged.

Itsuno: NT really loved Vergil. I think that's why they didn't alter him much.

Eshiro: Although at first, they were going to make him much more cold-blooded.

Itsuno: More of a pervert, too.

Eshiro: Kind of a cold-blooded killer with OCD. Whenever he killed someone - demon or otherwise - if some blood got on his glove, he'd immediately throw the glove away. That sort of guy.

Itsuno: I really liked the idea of an abnormally fastidious Vergil. That idea didn't come from us, though. In any case, the character gradually shifted back to the original Vergil. (laughs) I also liked the idea of giving him a hat, but that too was scrapped mid-development. Too bad, huh? (laughs)

Eshiro: Vergil's motion capture was done without the hat, so we didn't have data of him interacting with it. That's why the hat didn't last long. His sword, Yamato, was also originally going to be a cane sword, but at some point it reverted to an ordinary one.

Itsuno: They probably just ran out of time. Creating a character from scratch is quite the process.

How about the villain, Mundus?

Eshiro: Mundus' design was all them.



Itsuno: He's basically a foreigner's idea of what a demon is. The movie "Constantine" also had a human-looking devil. I was ready to see some demonic final villain, but then he's just this ordinary-looking old man.

Eshiro: Right. Lucifer was just a disheveled, bearded man.

Itsuno: I guess that fits with the religious viewpoint, anyway. So Mundus, too, was just some old man.

Eshiro: Albeit one with a ton of magic power.

Itsuno: We just have a hard time getting away from equating demons with Enma [Buddhist god of the afterlife].

Eshiro: Also the idea that demons are fundamentally evil. The foreign perspective seems to be that both demons and angels are human in a way. Angels can be seen as the goodness in humans; demons, the bad.

✦ WANTING TO MAKE A SEQUEL TO "DMC 4"

Finally, do you have any messages for the fans out there?

Itsuno: I'd love to work on a sequel to "DmC" as well as a sequel to the original series - one starring Dante and Nero. If those are things that people want to see, please let it be known however you can. Nothing would make me happier.

Eshiro: Although I may have started with the undoubtedly different "DmC", I still spent a long three years on it, so I'm quite attached to the series. In all honesty, I feel like we produced a rare gem of a game. By combining foreign aesthetics with Japanese game design, I believe we produced a very real answer to a puzzling formula that no other company had previously tackled successfully. I'd be thrilled to make another game like this one. If Itsuno were to rally the troops for a sequel to the original series, I'd be right there alongside him producing it. (laughs)

Thank you for your time.

